"SANCTITY IN OUR OWN DAYS" SERIES

The UNFOLDING *of the* LITTLE FLOWER

(SISTER THERESA OF LISIEUX)

By the
VERY REV. W. M. CUNNINGHAM, V.F.
With a Preface by
HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL GASQUET

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In memory of
Mrs. Theresa Erzgraber
July 8, 1928.

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THE UNFOLDING OF THE LITTLE FLOWER.

"Sanctity in our own Days" Series.

THE UNFOLDING OF THE LITTLE FLOWER

A STUDY OF THE LIFE AND SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE SERVANT OF GOD, SISTER THERESA OF THE CHILD JESUS, PROFESSED RELIGIOUS OF THE CARMEL OF LISIEUX

BY

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WITH A PREFACE

BY

HIS EMINENCE FRANCIS AIDAN CARDINAL GASQUET

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CONTENTS

Contents ... ... v.

List of Illustrations ... ... vii.

Preface. By His Eminence Cardinal Gasquet ... ... ix.

Decree of Introduction of Cause of Sister Theresa ... xiii.

Introduction ... ... xvii.

I. The Problem of Sister Theresa 1

II. Sister Theresa's Biography, a Lifting of the Veil of France's *Vie Intime* 5

III. Latin and English-Speaking Mentality Contrasted ... 8

IV. The Seed-Plot of the Little Flower 15

V. The Spring-Time of the Little Flower 19

VI. The Beginning of Sorrows 23

VII. The Second Sorrow 29

VIII. Our Lady's Smile 38

IX. The First Espousals 40

X. "In Exitu" 49

XI. The Pilgrimage to Rome 58

XII. In the Haven 63

XIII. The Ascent of Mount Carmel 79

XIV. The Dark Night of the Soul 98

APPENDIX

THE MESSENGER OF THE LITTLE FLOWER

An Anniversary: January 2nd. 1914 125

The New Portrait of Sister Theresa of the Child Jesus ... 131

The Way of Surrender to God 132

The Psalm of the Little Children 135

The Sprouting Corn 136

Graces and Favours 139

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

FRONTISPIECE (on Cover). LE SILLON D'OR (THE GOLDEN FURROW).

"I sat with Pauline on an isolated rock and gazed for long on this golden furrow which she told me was an image of grace enlightening the path of faithful souls here below. Then I pictured my heart as a little skiff, with a graceful white sail in the midst of the furrow, and there and then made up my mind never to let it drift out of the sight of Jesus, so that it might sail peacefully and quickly towards the heavenly shore."

I. THE SERVANT OF GOD, SISTER THERESA OF THE CHILD JESUS.

"For the winter is now past, the rain is over and gone; *the flowers have appeared in our land.*"—(Cant. ii. 11, 12).

II. BIRTHPLACE OF SISTER THERESA OF THE CHILD JESUS.

"It was in this house, 42 rue St. Blaise Alençon, that in midwinter on January 2nd. 1873, was born the 'Little Flower.'"

III. RUE SAINT-BLAISE, ALENÇON.

"It was in the year 1876, that M. Martin was able to retire from his jeweller's business, and went to live in his new house in the rue Saint-Blaise."

IV. GENERAL VIEW OF LISIEUX.

"Children love change, and anything out of the common, and so I was pleased at coming to Lisieux."

V. LISIEUX: LES BUISSONNETS.

"Les Buissonnets," the new house my father had taken, seemed delightful. The *belvidere*, with its distant view, the front garden laid out in English style, the large kitchen garden at the back, were all delightfully novel to my young mind."

VI. LISIEUX: PORTAL OF CHAPEL OF CARMEL.

"It was while going along with my father for his afternoon walk, that I first went into the Chapel of the Carmel. 'Look, little Queen,' he said to me, 'behind that big grating there are holy nuns who are always praying to Almighty God.'"

VII. EVENING ON THE RIVER TOUQUES, NEAR LISIEUX.

"They were glorious days for me whenever my 'beloved king' took me on a fishing expedition along with him. Sometimes I had a try at fishing with a little line of my own, but more often than not I preferred to sit a little apart on the flowery mead thinking deep thoughts."

VIII. LISIEUX : SIDE AISLE OF SAINT-PIERRE.

"As our sittings were in a side chapel a long way off from the pulpit, we used to have to come down and try to find places in the nave for the sermon."

IX. LISIEUX: NAVE OF SAINT-PIERRE, WITH PULPIT.

"It was not so easy to find a place near the pulpit for the

sermon, but every one was anxious to get a chair for the venerable patriarch leading his little daughter by the hand."

X. Lisieux: L'Abbaye (Benedictine Convent).

"I was eight and a half years old when I first went to school at the Benedictine Abbey at Lisieux."

XI. Lisieux: Playground at Benedictine Abbey.

"We had a holiday every Thursday . . . . but I was not much of a hand at playing games like other children . . . . but I did my best with indifferent success."

XII. Lisieux: Road from "Les Buissonnets" to Benedictine Convent.

"As a set off to my troubles at school, I luckily was able to go back to my father every evening."

XIII. Lisieux: A Typical Business Street.

"One evening coming back from school, I and my cousin Marie were playing at being hermits, and keeping to the footpath we both started walking home with our eyes shut. We flattered ourselves we were safe from traffic, but we reckoned without taking count of a pile of packing cases outside a shop door. . . . . We picked ourselves up, and ran for our lives."

XIV. Theresa and her Sister Celine, 1887.

"Celine had now become a little romp full of mischief, while Theresa had turned into quite a gentle little girl, only over much given to tears; so needing someone to stand up for me my dear little sister intrepidly took up the rôle of my champion."

XV. Lisieux: Theresa's Room at "Les Buissonnets," now a Chapel.

"Finding help nowhere on earth and at the point of death from my sufferings, I turned to my heavenly Mother, begging her with all my heart to take pity on me. All of a sudden the statue seemed to come to life . . . . with a gracious smile for me."

XVI. Lisieux. Benedictine Abbey: School Dormitory.

"During the retreat for my First Communion I became a boarder. . . . . Every night the First Mistress came with her little lamp and, softly drawing aside the curtains of my bed, kissed me tenderly on the forehead."

XVII. Lisieux: Chapel of Benedictine Convent.

Theresa made her First Communion kneeling on the step at the middle of the grille. "How sweet was the first embrace of Jesus! I felt I was loved, and I said in return: 'I love Thee, and give myself to Thee for ever.'"

XVIII. Lisieux: Oratory of Children of Mary, Benedictine Convent.

"Later, after leaving school, I went back for two days a week, to the Convent, so as to enter the Children of Mary. When the day's work was over, as no one seemed to want me, I used to go into the tribune of the Chapel, and wait there till my father came to fetch me home."

XIX. In Sight of Port.

"Magister adest et vocat te."—(Joan. xi. 28).

XX. Theresia in Pace

PREFACE

The life of Sister Theresa of Lisieux, better known now perhaps as the "Little Flower of Jesus," has a special interest of its own. These are days of a general disbelief in, or disregard of the supernatural, and we, who have to move about the world, can hardly fail if we do not take care, to be more or less infected by the poisonous atmosphere which we have to breathe. Against this peril we have to guard our souls and hearts by every means in our power. To be reminded, as we are so vividly in this life that Our Lord and His Blessed Mother, with the Angels and Saints are ever at hand and that a simple soul devoted to God, can be in constant and easy communication with them, is a great and useful grace. The main difference between the prosaic days in which we live and the "Ages of Faith," before the spirit of scientific scepticism had seized upon the world, lies, I think, principally in the fact, that to the people of those days—even to those indeed, who did not live up to their own ideals—heaven and the supernatural world was not even, so to speak, next door; it was an ever present reality to the Christian mind and was as certain and as true, as was the natural world of the senses. There was nothing strained in this mental attitude in days when God reigned in the hearts of men generally and when the notion that man could do without religion was rare if not wholly unknown. Of course there were men and women then as always, who led lives inconsistent with their professions; but they, living as they were in the supernatural atmosphere of those times—an atmosphere which, if I may so express it, gave a singular beauty to their faith, as the sun's rays give the bloom to the peach or the plum—were out of joint with their surroundings. There can be no doubt that the vast majority of Christians in those arcadian days brought God into their lives. He was an ever present reality to them and they lived with the Angels and the Saints and looked to our Blessed Mother for help and protection, and turned to her as naturally as they would to their earthly fathers and mothers.

What may astonish many readers of this life of "The Little Flower of Jesus" is that she existed at all in this materialistic age, even though she grew up and shed the perfume of her virtues in the sheltered cloister of a strict and observant religious Community. Still a little reflection will show us that after all there was again but manifested in her a return to the Church's traditional type of sanctity, albeit the type was adapted somewhat to our modern conditions. God is always "wonderful in His Saints," and the marvels of His grace are displayed in their lives. Most certainly as we read the pages of the short life of Sister Theresa we shall be far from the atmosphere befitting a Catholic, if we are not drawn to realise that even to-day God is not far from our own world and that it is a sober truth and no poetic expression to say and believe that "in Him we live and move and have our being."

There is another consideration, which the perusal of this life of "The Little Flower" suggests. In the modern world of to-day besides the evident yearning after the supernatural which exists so widely, there is a certain wistful desire for some form of perpetual youth. The cult of "Peter Pan," the boy that never grew up, shows here in England the extraordinary prevalence of the desire. To most people it may appear ridiculous to say that this is realised more in the stricter forms of religious life than elsewhere in the world. But it has again and again been noticed that the most cheerful dispositions and overflowing good spirits are to be found among those nuns who have been called to lead the strictest and most mortified lives.

One of the sayings of this holy young soul recorded in the pages of her life bears directly on this and should be a comfort and a help to those who have grave responsibilities and who are sometimes blamed for "not keeping up appearances," or failing to maintain airs of preternatural gravity. Replying to one of her Sisters, who spoke of the terrible cares of those who discharge grave spiritual responsibilities, she answered with emphasis:—"To him that is *little* mercy is granted. (Wisd. vi. 7.) It is quite possible to remain *little*, whilst filling the most responsible positions; and is it not written that the Lord 'will arise to SAVE the meek and lowly ones of the earth?' It is not said to judge, but to save."

Then, too, what must strike anyone who will read the following pages of this life is the "peace" of it all, a deep, calm, settled

peace that never left her soul, in spite of lifelong sorrows, continual aridity and at the end blackest desolation. The story comes to our busy, distracted hearts and brains as a gentle summer rain falling on a parched and thirsty ground. The even tenor of her existence alone is refreshing to our wearied spirits. Its magnificent fidelity to God even in the smallest details of His service comes as a tonic to our sluggish characters, and is an incentive to even the most torpid amongst us; whilst the hidden fires of Divine Love, which like those of the "Burning Bush," burnt bright but did not consume her loving heart, make us understand what are the satisfying joys of those who truly serve and love God with their whole hearts and souls.

F. AIDAN CARDINAL GASQUET.

16 Harpur Street, London. W.C.

July 7th. 1914.

DECREE OF THE INTRODUCTION OF THE CAUSE OF SISTER THERESA OF THE CHILD JESUS

DIOCESE OF BAYEUX AND LISIEUX

DECREE OF THE SACRED CONGREGATION OF RITES CONCERNING THE BEATIFICATION AND CANONIZATION OF THE SERVANT OF GOD SISTER THERESA OF THE CHILD JESUS PROFESSED RELIGIOUS IN THE MONASTERY OF THE ORDER OF DISCALCED CARMELITES AT LISIEUX.

The Servant of God, Theresa of the Child Jesus, a Professed Discalced Carmelite nun in the Monastery of Lisieux, the Introduction of whose cause before the Sacred Congregation of Rites is now in question, the youngest of nine children of Louis Stanislaus Martin and Marie Zélie Guérin (his wife), was born at Alençon in the Diocese of Séez on January 2nd. 1873, and two days later in Holy Baptism was given the name of Marie-Francoise Thérèse.

Having being carefully trained in habits of piety by the good example of all around her in her home, on the death of her mother and the removal of the family to Lisieux, as a little girl of nine years old she was entrusted by her father to the nuns of the Order of St. Benedict for her education. Her constant reading was of that excellent book "The Imitation of Christ" as well as of the Sacred Scriptures, both of which she made use of to further her own and her neighbour's edification. After having been cured in a wonderful way of a serious malady by which she had been attacked, she began more ardently to yearn for the "better gifts," especially setting her heart on devoting herself entirely to the perpetual service of God. Accordingly her own sisters having elected to become enclosed nuns, she after returning home from school, never desisted until, her wish being fulfilled, in the year 1888 she entered the Monastery of the Carmelite nuns at Lisieux, where clothed with the religious habit, taking the name

of Theresa of the Child Jesus, and having passed through her noviciate in an exemplary manner, on September 8th. 1890 she pronounced her solemn vows. Three years later being appointed to aid with the duties of Mistress of Novices, she faithfully and holily continued to discharge the duties of this office until her death. Towards the close of her 23rd. year, the Servant of God being afflicted with a deadly malady of the lungs, was obliged to take to her bed. For five months having lain prostrate in consequence of the steady progress of the inroads of the disease, borne by her most patiently, she eventually passed away in the Lord on September 30th. 1897, and after all the last funeral rites had been duly carried out, she was buried in the Cemetery of Lisieux.

The fame for sanctity which Sister Theresa had acquired during her lifetime, after her death became notably so widespread and so enduring that an enquiry for the taking of evidence regarding her was set on foot by the authority of the Bishop of her Diocese. This enquiry having been brought to a close, and the evidence having been transmitted to the sacred Congregation of Rites, as soon as all preliminaries were duly carried through, at the instance af the Most Reverend Father Roderick of St. Francis of Paula, Postulator General of the Order of Discalced Carmelites, who petitioned for the Introduction of the Cause, due consideration having been given to the Letters of certain of the Most Eminent Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church, of many Bishops, as well as of the heads of Orders and Congregations of both sexes, the Most Eminent and most Reverend Lord Cardinal Jerome Gotti, the Cardinal in charge of the Cause, at an ordinary Meeting of the sacred Congregation of Rites held at the Vatican on the date mentioned below, submitted the following question for discussion—*Should the Commission for the Introduction of the Cause be signed in the present case, and to the given effect ?*

Whereupon the Most Eminent and Reverend Fathers, the Cardinals on the sacred Congregation of Rites, after hearing the statement of the Most Eminent Cardinal in charge of the Cause, as well as the views given in writing and by word of mouth, by the Right Reverend Father Alexander Verde, Promotor of the Holy Faith, after carefully weighing the matter in all its bearings, decided that it should be written in answer:—*Yes, that is, that the Commission should be signed, if approved by His Holiness.* June 9th. 1914.

Later on an account of these matters having been given to our most holy Lord, Pope Pius X by the undersigned Secretary of the sacred Congregation of Rites, His Holiness giving his approval to the Rescript of the said Congregation, with his own hand was pleased to sign the Commission for the Introduction of the Cause of the Beatification and Canonization of the Servant of God Sister Theresa of the Child Jesus, Discalced Carmelite of the Monastery of Lisieux, the tenth day of the same month and year.

Fr. S. Card. Martinelli, Prefect.
✠ Peter La Fontaine, Bp. of Carystus, Secretary

INTRODUCTION

This little publication first took shape as a magazine, which it was intended should appear in the January of the present year, 1914; but in view of the fact that the question of the Introduction of the Cause of the Servant of God, Sister Theresa of the Child Jesus, was then under consideration by the Sacred Congregation of Rites, it was thought more becoming that the publication should be deferred, and that when it appeared it should take book form.

Since then, on an ever memorable date, June 9th. 1914, the feast of St. Columba, like his patron St. John, an Apostle of Divine Love, as well as the anniversary of Sister Theresa's offering of herself on Trinity Sunday 1895, as a Victim of Divine Love, acting on the decision of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, our Holy Father Pius X, of happy memory, signed the formal document of the Introduction of the Cause.

The change from that of a periodical to book form brought into special prominence what was intended should be but one of the features of the projected magazine, viz., a study of the character and spiritual development of Sister Theresa of the Child Jesus, who seemed especially interesting as a typical example of sanctity in our own days, manifested in a life lived under modern conditions.

The appearance of such a study of her life seemed not uncalled for, as an examination of the books already published about Sister Theresa showed that no complete life of her had yet appeared. Two translations of her Autobiography have already been printed in English, and the latter of these has been supplemented by an Introduction and concluding Chapters by her religious Sisters, as well as a selection of her Letters, thus forming a most valuable mine of materials for a critical study.

A perusal of the original French version of her Autobiography has also helped to throw still further light on her most attractive personality, and in quoting from it I have endeavoured as far as possible to reproduce the pellucid yet elusive charm of the French original.

Those amongst us, including a Bishop and a Prince of the Church, who in our student days had the privilege of following the lectures on Philosophy of our distinguished and revered Professor, the Very Reverend Canon Scannell, D.D., will all remember how frequently he deplored the meagre character of most Saints' lives, in that scarcely ever was any indication given as to the slow and painful stages of struggle by which the at first imperfect ordinary good Christian at length attained to heroic sanctity. Such a revelation, he maintained, would have a far more powerful influence for good on the world than descriptions of miracles which after all are of use mainly as testifying to the genuine character of the Saint's union with God.

In the Autobiography of Sister Theresa we have at last a description of such a development that leaves nothing further to be wished for either in clearness, orderly progress, or minuteness. It is needless to say it is the life story of a character that is attractive even from the natural standpoint—but a character that has its natural, and some might say, even supernatural limitations; and from it we learn how grace can even make use of such disadvantages as means to attain closer union with God.

It is thus instructive for us to be given an insight into the spiritual life of a soul who loved our Lord, as she herself says, to distraction, who would have given all she had to be privileged to die a martyr for Him, and yet found formal meditation difficult, spiritual books meaningless, beautiful prayers beyond her, and could never keep herself from dropping off to sleep during meditation or after Holy Communion. Her explanation is that she has never grown up—she is always to be a child in mind, with all a child's unfinish and inexperience, but retaining too all a child's generous, unselfish, uncalculating affection for those it loves.

As our erstwhile Professor so well foresaw, the making known the story of such a life has had a most powerful effect for good. It has cleared away many misconceptions about heroic sanctity; it has made understandable the teaching that it is within the power of any good Christian, with the help of God's grace to become a saint—and not least, it has made sanctity attractive—so it is not to be wondered at that the name of the Virgin of Lisieux is now a household word in every part of the Catholic world.

It would however, give our readers a very inadequate idea of the mission of Sister Theresa of Lisieux if we merely left it at this.

In these days of ours she stands for much more. Living out her young life in her quiet provincial home, and in the still more retired calm of the Carmel, she yet seems to touch modern life at all points. She seems almost of set purpose, brought out before the eyes of the world as a living example of sanctity in our own days, and there are very many modern problems on which her short but intense life seems to shed light.

The first would seem to be the problem of *suffering*. Even good people look on suffering as evil—an evil to be borne patiently and so a means of merit, but still in itself better away.

When we turn to the life of Sister Theresa we find her whole life darkened by suffering—and apparently needless sufferings piled one upon another. But when we view the whole life in perspective, we discover the key to this suffering. She could not have spared a single cross. Had even one been wanting, something would have been lost to her attractive sanctity. Even the great loss of all, that seemed at the time a spiritual as well as earthly loss, her mother's death, was in all probability the one determining factor in shaping her destiny and making her a saint.

All man's energies at the present day seem to be getting more and more concentrated on the aim of getting rid of pain and physical evil as the one great objective of civilised man, and numbers of Catholics seem to be swept along unthinkingly with the crowd, and to accept this aim as the end and all of life.

The whole of Sister Theresa's short life is a challenge to this view. Had her mother lived, had her own life been unchequered with sorrow, had she lived to be the joy and brightness of her home and of her father and mother's declining years, most likely we should be the poorer for the loss of her ideal. Judging too by the evidence that seems accumulating day by day, it appears not too much to say that during the last few years since her saintly death, it seems undeniable that many a tear has been dried, and many a loving parent or child has been snatched from the very jaws of death through Sister Theresa's intercession. It would really seem as if every tear she herself had shed, every pang she endured so patiently for the sake of her Beloved in her quiet, remote life in the little Norman town, is now efficacious in bringing relief and comfort to her brethren in every corner of the wide earth.

The extraordinary results that seem undeniably to follow

so frequently when she is invoked, seem also to provide a striking answer to the modern difficulty as to belief in the continuance of conscious individual life after death. Modern difficulties are not now concerned so much with the acceptance of the various teachings of faith, as with the one crucial point of *life after death.*

We shall see that in her own person, she was no stranger to this difficulty. Theresa is so typically modern that in spite of her cloistered seclusion, for the sake of her afflicted brethren, and affected in some subtle way by the *zeitgeist*, she herself experienced in her soul all the agony of doubt and apprehension that plays such havoc with the lives of many who but for it, might be happy, contented Catholics.

As she pathetically put it, she was willing to sit at the table of bitterness with poor sinners and eat their bread of sorrow, and not to stir from it until her Beloved gave her the sign—and He left her there till the very end. All this she went through for her afflicted brethren, so that they might be spared the ordeal that in so many cases makes their hands hang listless at their sides. "Strengthen ye the feeble hands, and confirm the faint knees. Say to the faint-hearted: 'Take courage and fear not. God Himself will come and save you,'" (Is. xxxv. 3, 4), she seems to say as she encourages her brethren to the combat. Her interventions by acts of astounding power on their behalf seem indisputable if any credit can be attached to cumulative evidence—more than this from one quarter and another come testimonies that though she has cast off her "workaday dress" (her material body), as she called it, yet she has been seen more than once on her errands of mercy, returning as she foretold, to do good upon the earth.

She has breathed a new spirit into the sons of her own beloved land of France. It will be but a few years more before we see the full fruits of her intercession, the response to her clarion call to arms. Too long have Catholics supinely lain down under the authority of so-called *law*, the fetish of the ballot box—and whispering—"C'est la loi," cravenly have endured insults to their faith and to the Church of their Lord and Master.

Sister Theresa's call to arms, like another Joan of Arc is an inspiration to them. "Why submit?" she seems to say—"Why allow such dastardly legislation to go through by counting of noses? Are you not as good men, yea and better, than the

enemies of God. They have no hope. Surely you ought at least have the intrepidity of the early followers of Mahomet who fought so fearlessly for an earthly paradise? They strove for a corruptible crown, we an incorruptible one."

Catholic France too, has not marked in vain the object lesson, presented by recent political events in our own country, that a minority of resolute men with guns in their hands can make any civilised government give pause.

It is time Catholics at last were up and doing. Were they only *united* and ready to take the risks, they could soon put an end to the shameful oppression of the Church in Latin countries, the work of hungry place-hunters and "grafters" who would run helter-skelter at the first sight of cold steel or straight shooting.

Theresa will ever be for her countrymen the ideal of noble and generous impulses. She will always appeal to them with her loving generous unselfish service of her Lord—a cheerful service, that of her "little way," which has killed out once for all the last lingering remnants of Jansenist rigorism. To a generation also that so wistfully seeks to avoid old age and that is ever endeavouring to surprise the elixir of eternal youth, Theresa appears too as possessing already the secret—"I shall never grow up," she says—"it will be quite out of the question." We need only study her life to see to truth of what she says. Such a character as hers can never grow old, and after all it is the soul that is the form of the body. And in her ever youthful enthusiasm, like a second Joan of Arc, she calls upon her brethren to follow her and to drive the enemy out of the land. As the end came in sight and she felt she had been able to do so little, she wrote—"I feel within myself the vocation to be a *warrior*, a priest, an apostle, a doctor of the Church, a martyr. . . . I yearn to accomplish deeds of heroism—I feel within myself the courage of a Crusader, and I long to die on the *field of battle* in defence of the Church." May we not believe that the crushed bundle of myrrh of Theresa's life may be the means of drawing down countless graces on the people of God—and that ages to come will look back on the gentle, generous, childlike, but intrepid Virgin of Lisieux as the harbinger of a new era for the Church of God.

W. M. C.

Sevenoaks, June 9th. 1914.

LE SILLON D'OR

(THE GOLDEN FURROW)

"I sat with Pauline on an isolated rock and gazed for long on this golden furrow which she told me was an image of grace enlightening the path of faithful souls here below. Then I pictured my heart as a little skiff with a graceful white sail in the midst of the furrow, and there and then made up my mind never to let it drift out of the sight of Jesus, so that it might sail peacefully and quickly towards the heavenly shore."

THE UNFOLDING OF THE LITTLE FLOWER

A Study of the Life and Spiritual Development of the Servant of God, Sister Theresa of the Child Jesus, a Professed Sister of the Carmel of Lisieux.

"How narrow is the gate and strait the way that leads to life, and few there are that find it."—(Matth. vii. 14).

CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM OF SISTER THERESA

I have just finished carefully reading the autobiography of Sister Theresa of Lisieux. I must confess that before doing so I was somewhat prejudiced against accepting her as a great saint, mainly I may say, through the accounts I received about her from some of her devout clients.

Experience always tends to make one sceptical about the existence of "ready-made" saints, and perhaps through want of sympathy, I had failed to properly appreciate what I had been told about her.

I shall leave it to my readers to judge whether my impression of what seemed to me the common report was correct or not.

As far as I remember I was told something like this:—Some years ago there died in France a dear little Carmelite nun who is now a great saint. She was not like the old-fashioned saints, who led lives of penance and mortification. She was just like one of ourselves. She was ever so simple and spontaneous, and fell into simple childish faults; but in spite of it all she made herself a saint by her loving devotion to our Divine Lord. All her life through, she gained the affection of all, first of all in her happy affluent home where her father and sisters loved her as the youngest, and when she entered the Convent two of her sisters were already there before her, so that her religious life was only a continuation of that of her home.

Of course she was pious and good and a faithful follower of

her Rule, but she had few very great trials. She was always shielded and cherished by those she loved, and her mind never developed, but remained always that of a guileless little child, until after eight years of bright, happy, pious life in the beautifully situated convent at Lisieux, she fell a victim to phthisis, and in spite of all the care lavished upon her, died a painless death of ecstacy and love at the age of twenty-four.

Shortly before her happy death, a fitting crown to her simple infantile life, as if to show how efficacious this new and easy way of attaining sanctity really is, she, it is related, had hoped she would not even go to Purgatory, and would also keep on working miracles for good people till the end of the world. Her words were :—" I shall spend my eternity doing good upon the earth—I shall send down a shower of roses after my death." To crown it all I was told, as a consolation to imperfect souls, that the answers that seem to come as a consequence of prayers made to her are so numerous and so striking that they seem to be in many cases really miraculous, and all except a few wicked people have become her clients, and are encouraging one another to follow her easy delightful way of spiritual childhood.

It may be easily understood that a somewhat imperfect account like the above of the making of a Saint was calculated to inspire one with a certain amount of mistrust both as to the correctness of the narrative, which seemed inadequate and contradictory, as well as to the deductions that could rightly be drawn from it as to the sanctity of the subject.

Added to this, one also heard criticisms from unsympathetic persons who evidently misled by the hasty generalisations we have quoted, and not troubling to read the life of Sister Theresa, pronounced judgment on one about whom they knew little or nothing.

The unfavourable criticisms generally ran on certain hackneyed lines and were devoted to pointing out the inconsistencies of the popular account.

Professing an air of wide experience the critics passed their strictures somewhat in the following strain :—Alas ! why cannot our pious Catholics follow out quietly the teaching of the Church ? But no, they are always on the look out for something *new*, and for some easy way to go to Heaven without having to struggle and do penance. Unfortunately now this new devotion professes to show such a new way to Heaven and quite an easy one for those

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BIRTHPLACE OF SISTER THERESA OF THE CHILD JESUS

"It was in this house, 42 rue St. Blaise, Alençon, that in midwinter, on January 2nd, 1873, was born the 'Little Flower.'"

who do not wish to follow the old narrow way. It is just Quietism all over again. It seems based on the self-centred memoirs of a sort of modern, piously inclined, cloistered Marie Bashkirtseff, a young nun of undoubted goodness and piety, but one who was so petted and spoilt that she ended by persuading herself she had become a saint without taking any trouble, and who dying prematurely in her child-like innocence, naturally fell into the delusion that she was not only an ordinary, innocent-living, good religious, but that she was actually what her superiors flattered her into believing—a great saint. Unfortunately, the mischief did not end here. It seems that some words she let fall, as to praying in Heaven for those she was leaving, were interpreted as amounting to a promise to work miracles, and this legend having been propagated, all the numerous under-vitalised, morbid, and neurotic beings who in all countries seem to gravitate inevitably to a profession of religiosity, have taken up propagating devotion to her, and of course find no difficulty in contributing most marvellous accounts of cures and other graces that in reality are not cures at all, but only the products of their fertile imaginations, or the alleviations of purely neurotic derangements brought about by hysterical stimulation: so the delusion goes on to the discredit of true religion and the derision of the unbeliever.

Clearly amidst such conflicting views, the only line for one to take who wished to come to an independent judgment was to study the life of Sister Theresa, by an impartial examination of all original documents; so I set myself down to a perusal of her life and letters.

I have now finished. Seldom has it been my fortune to come across such an enthralling narrative of the growth in sanctity of a living human soul. Possibly the lives of many of the saints must have been on similar lines, but we were not intended to know their secret in its fulness. In the case of Sister Theresa of the Child Jesus we are able to trace, stage by stage, in a manner seldom given to us, and are able to watch in detail the marvellous growth of an unspoilt human soul, acted upon by extraordinary graces, from the early years when it "spoke as a child" and "thought as a child" until "consummatus in brevi," it reached its fulness of development by rapid though normal stages. Then at an age when a similar soul in a less precocious English speaking environment like our own, would be still almost a child in mind,

Sister Theresa's soul was an exemplification of the words "a spotless life is old age" (Wisd. iv. 9.), and her development having reached its highest possible perfection, an early death seemed almost an inevitable consequence as being the only way by which that process of development could attain its end.

CHAPTER II

SISTER THERESA'S BIOGRAPHY, A LIFTING OF THE VEIL OF FRANCE'S *VIE INTIME.*

I think I have made it clear that a careful reading of the life of Sister Theresa had cleared up for me the mystery of her character by setting out in detail the stages of her progress and the solid nature of her heroic sanctity, but it did far more than this.

It was the lifting of a veil and a glimpse into another world. It is seldom, very seldom, one is admitted into the intimacy of life as it is lived in other lands.

Sometimes it is true, we have published memoirs and diaries of worldlings living under varied and diverse conditions, but there is a striking family likeness in the aims and mode of life of those who live a life of gratification of the senses—so such books seldom tell us anything new—but for the moment I cannot recall to mind any other human document pourtraying so vividly as this narrative does, the atmosphere and supernatural temper of mind of a fervent French Catholic family in the nineteenth century.

Let me add, everything this life discloses is so novel, so precocious, so extraordinarily other-worldly that it almost makes us feel as if we were reading an account of life on another planet.

As the epic progresses, instead of finding in Sister Theresa a gentle, somewhat self-centred and inexperienced young nun, one found oneself almost aghast at being brought up against a quite startling instance of almost incredible self-abnegation and heroic emptying of self, maintained with the help of few natural or supernatural consolations, and carried to an extent undreamt of by any but saints. In a word, Sister Theresa is one of the valiant women of Scripture, and more.

Day by day in the cold light of blind faith was this ideal lived up to by a keen, bright, active, humorous and practical human soul, yet the insight one had been given into the home training of such a chosen soul made everything seem normal and almost inevitable.

The story of the home life at Alençon and Lisieux with its revelations of the Catholic family life of France threw a light on my memories of many a wandering awheel through France in past years—of the bright smiling landscapes of Normandy with the green hillsides dotted with apple orchards like our own Devon—the peaceful, quiet country life—on the foothills, the tranquil towns basking in the sunshine, with their winding faubourgs—the solid comfortable looking houses of the bourgeois (in a typical one of which Marie Françoise Thérèse Martin was born in 1873 at Alençon), the Grande Place, with its picturesque homeliness, its hotels and its cafés, the country carriers' carts drawn up in it as in our own market towns, and always the spacious nobly-planned Cathedral or Parish Church.

At Mass the next morning one was met with the exquisite courtesy of the French clergy, now as ever the *fine fleur* of the priesthood, and there one had the only chance of seeing face to face and observing the types of fervent Catholics, the outside of whose homes was all one otherwise could hope to see.

In the morning at Mass how often was one charmed and edified by the beautiful, tranquil, classical faces of the elderly officer, or the retired professional man, the refined, exquisitely simply attired wives of the merchants of the town, the young people with their parents, the servants and market women with their baskets on their arms as the marketing was over, the boys and girls the hope of France of the future, all hearing Mass and receiving our Divine Lord in preparation for the day's work.

How one wished to know more of them ; to have an insight into the lives of peace and recollection so visibly written on their spiritualised faces, so eloquent in their very mien and carriage ; close brethren with us in the unity of the faith and the mystical body of Christ and yet through differences of tongue, surroundings, and heredity almost as remote from us as if they were living in another world.

I remember, on one such occasion being in company with a young priest who is now the much respected Vicar-General of one of the most important Dioceses in England, we found difficulty in obtaining permission to celebrate Mass in the glorious Cathedral of St. Gatien at Tours, and were counselled by a most helpful and courteous member of the Chapter to apply at the "Sainte Face," where, he said, they were used to have foreign

priests coming to say Mass. To save us from losing the way he gave us a little guide who took us to what was once M. Dupont's (a layman) private house. It was just such another quiet comfortable substantial home as the residence of M. Martin in Alençon, but at Tours all the ground floor rooms were turned into a roomy chapel in which numbers of Masses were said every morning, while upstairs was the room in which the holy man had died.

This was in June, 1888, just two months after Marie Thérèse Martin had entered the Carmel of Lisieux as a postulant.

It struck me as unusual that in an ecclesiastical country such as Catholic France is, a layman's private house should become a place of pilgrimage, and herein we felt lay a world of the unknown that one from England could scarcely penetrate.

We knew that this was undoubtedly a feature of life in countries where the faith was living and universal, handed down without a break from century to century ; that it was just the same in St. Theresa's day in Spain, as we read her wisest and most experienced directors in her early days were pious laymen, friends of her father's family. What to a certain extent would always have been a sealed book has now been opened and the veil lifted for us by the inexpressibly charming and touching narrative of life in that training school of saints, the happy, peaceful, holy Christian home of M. Louis Martin at Alençon and Lisieux.

CHAPTER III

LATIN AND ENGLISH-SPEAKING MENTALITY CONTRASTED.

I fear I shall be judged to have exaggerated in laying stress on the very great gap that exists between continental and English mentality when I explained how difficult it is for English-speaking Catholics to form any conception of the earnestness and intensity of religious life amongst fervent Catholics, in what at first sight seems sleepy, peaceful, brooding France.

One of the few piquant contrasts that are still to be found in a world that is fast becoming the same everywhere, is that of crossing from active busy England, where life seems so hurried and helter-skelter, to Calais, where one almost seems to get into touch with the outposts of the brooding calm of the East. A somewhat similar experience can be had within even a shorter interval by passing in a few minutes from the shouting and bustle of the busy Belgian holiday towns on the Meuse to the almost cloistered calm of Givet with grass growing in its cobbled streets.

A keen observer will not take it for granted that the absence of activity implies the possession of all the virtues, as the book-stall in the Gare de Givet is loaded with questionable French novels that are not allowed to be even seen at busy Hastière, a few miles only down the Meuse over the Belgian frontier.

In trying to explain such differences one is always in danger of falling foul of either side. Thus, our English speaking Catholics are apt to believe that French Catholic home life is much the same as their own, except that living as they do in a country where the tradition of Government is that of interfering as little as possible with the private liberty of any section of the population, they flatter themselves that the liberty they enjoy as Catholics is somehow due to the intrepidity they exhibit as defenders of the faith ; and from their supposed superior standpoint, utter the aspiration that French Catholics, who otherwise, they think, are much the same as themselves would do well to wake up a little and bestir themselves and so right things in France.

RUE SAINT-BLAISE, ALENÇON

"It was in the year 1871 that M. Martin was able to retire from his jeweller's business and went to live in his new house in the rue Saint-Blaise."

The English Catholic little realises, except possibly in a slight degree of recent years, what it is to live under a fully organised bureaucracy, and is quite unaware of all the cross currents and conflicting political interests of a country that has had eight different forms of Government within a century, and that is still only in process of settling down after doing away with an hereditary monarchy and guillotining most of its hereditary governing class.

On the other hand, I am quite prepared to find a pious French Catholic family could not avoid feeling, and perhaps expressing polite surprise at the idea that their home life would require any explanation for Catholics in any part of the world. "Surely," they would say, "the Faith makes us one. We have the same Sacraments, the same Mass, the same laws of the Church—how can we be different?"

This is all very true, and France especially is so vast a country that its inhabitants often are led to think that the characteristics of other lands are not so very different from the local differences that obtain within its borders between what were the former provinces. In the composition of a Catholic there are three elements, just as with the Sacraments, (i.) the matter, that is the race and heredity of the individual, going back for centuries; (ii.) the form, that is the present circumstances and environment, and (iii.) divine grace, so that in different countries two out of the three elements have very little in common.

Time after time as I read with delight the veritable idyll of the life of little Theresa in a home that seemed steeped in all the aroma and sanctity of that of Nazareth, was it borne in on me that here at last was a photographic pourtrayal of the home life of the little ones whom I had seen 25 years ago, praying so raptly by the side of their parents; that one could gain from the picture an idea of what otherwise would always have remained a sealed book, viz., the routine of home-life in a French Catholic family, and incidentally a glimpse too into what perhaps is hardest to realise, the great, the enormous difference there is in the mentality of French and English children.

I trust I shall not be understood as wishing to draw invidious comparisons between English and French mental development. From a religious point of view this would be without meaning. But it is helpful to point out that grace in every race has different

material to work upon and that its work has to be done under different surroundings. Also as a rule it accommodates itself to the natural character, so that a Latin, a Teutonic or a Celtic Saint each manifests in himself the typical racial characteristics informed (i.e., influenced) by grace. As St. Paul says, "Now there are diversities of graces but the same spirit; and there are diversities of ministeries but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but the same God Who worketh all in all." (I. Cor. xiii. 4). Grace then does its work, not by abolishing, but by modifying and transforming the natural character, and consequently certain types of character either by heredity or by temperament certainly seem to lend themselves to the operations of grace, in such wise that its visible results are more apparent.

When therefore, we are privileged in a life like that of Sister Theresa to gaze on the operations of grace in her soul, both in her life of herself, written under obedience, and still more closely perhaps, because she was less self-conscious, in her letters the outpourings of her youthful soul to her beloved sisters, we become conscious of the fact that leaving grace aside, we are watching the development of a soul, young in years, it is true, but precocious and intelligent to such a degree, that our more slowly developed minds find it hard to realise in reading her letters, written when she was 13 or 14 years old, that they are those of one whom, looking only at her age and simple history, we should consider quite a child.

I remember once being asked when conducting the religious examination of a Convent school which had been exiled from Normandy, to also examine a class made up of exclusively of French children who could not yet speak English. When I was introduced to the class I could scarcely believe my eyes that they were really French children. Being Normans, a large number were fair-haired with almost Saxon blue eyes and clear complexions. Most of them being only about twelve years old had the guileless open physiognomies of our typical Anglo-Saxon children, whose minds at that age are devoid of subtlety.

I really found it very hard beforehand to persuade myself that when they spoke they would not speak in English, but as soon as they opened their mouths the illusion was dispelled. The childish features lit up with animation beyond their years, their accent was quick, vivacious and clear cut, their thought logical,

incisive and intelligent, they were eloquent in gesture, self-possessed and acutely self-conscious ; all evidently most anxious to do themselves justice, far more so perhaps than English girls who were six or seven years their seniors.

Here I take it we have a typical instance of the different mentality of young Catholic children on either side of the narrow English Channel. As a result of race (the blending of the Latin with the Celtic and Teutonic), climate, and environment, the French child is precocious, a clear intelligent thinker, in fact a little personality at an age when an English child can only repeat by rote or learn stories, and is still occupied with its toys.

This does not necessarily mean that the French child is superior, or the English one inferior ; it is simply a case of slower or more rapid development. The Bengalee child developes still more rapidly, is if anything more intelligent, and possibly shows signs of the oncoming of old age in the thirties; but every type has its advantages and its drawbacks. Added to this early precocity the French child is more spontaneous, it feels more vividly, more acutely, and the expression of emotion by it is not discouraged.

The English child does not as a rule feel so acutely (or so exaggeratedly, one might say), even if it feels things it soon acquires the notion that it is a point of honour to conceal its feelings. Being by nature free from sensitiveness and an individualist it does not occupy itself much about the good opinion of others, and so is not self-conscious nor so anxious to win their approval. This mental slowness, is also accompanied by retardation of emotional and physical development, which in itself makes for a vast difference in the mentality of sanctity in the different races.

Perhaps we see this more clearly illustrated in the more Latinised races like the Italians. While merely a child of twelve, St. Agnes consecrates herself to our Lord, and the Responsories of her Office (strikingly rendered into French by Sister Theresa) represent her as addressing her Divine Spouse in language that most likely would convey little to an English nun of over thirty years of age. Similarly St. Catherine of Siena at five years of age, made a vow of chastity and would never look at a man. Normal English children of similar age and much older would still quite naturally have no dreams of anything but childish interests and amusements. In her writings Sister Theresa speaks often of

treading the path of spiritual childhood, as being a description of the way of sanctity in which she was led, and many with our English preconception of the meaning of " childhood," not noticing the emphasis on the word, *spiritual,* and misled by her sublime humility and unconsciousness, have fallen into the error of thinking of her as having lived out her life while still remaining a child in mind and of imagining that her way of sanctity was therefore a path of ease and freedom from effort, instead of being as it really was, the divesting herself of every possible thing this earth held dear for her, so that she brought herself and her wants down to the level of an infant, who knows and cares not for aught but the actual minimum of food and warmth needful for supporting existence. Thus, this way of childhood meant for her a way of ceaseless crucifixion, nay, almost of annihilation of self from the beginning to the end of life. No wonder now she works miracles !

It is well for English speaking readers not to lose sight of all these, to them possibly unknown factors in the pyschology of sanctity in the Latin races (amongst whom, in the natural order, we similarly have instances of persons becoming disillusioned and middle-aged even before they are 25), as otherwise they might fall into the one or other error of unreasonably depreciating our more slowly developed and reserved temperament as being incapable of high sanctity, or on the other hand sneering at and denying the reality and heroic nature of youthful sanctity abroad, on the erroneous ground that the mental maturity it implies is either unreal or else symptomatic of hysteria or some kindred nervous affection. As a matter of fact in Latin nations we are confronted with a type of character that more especially lends itself to the visible operations of grace, and that is the reason why, as a rule the slowly developing northern nations have fewer instances of striking *charismata* than the more rapidly maturing Southern races. It does not follow that sanctity is more rare or less highly developed amongst Northern races ; it is just possible that solid virtue may be more general, though less intense, and perhaps concealed. In the case even of Sister Theresa, she never worked miracles while on earth and very likely if she had not been encouraged to write the history of how she had been led by the Holy Spirit she would have been one more instance of a saint whose holiness was known to God alone.

Also as we shall see later on, accompanying sanctity of the

General View of Lisieux

"Children love change and anything out of the common, and so I was pleased at coming to Lisieux."

Latin type there are often many crosses of a humiliating nature that flow from a perhaps intensified intellectual keenness of mind. Thus in the case of many great saints, like St. Francis de Sales, great sanctity manifested by striking spiritual favours was allowed to be counterbalanced by the humiliation of constant temptations against faith; so that the much tried saint, as far as *feelings* went, was almost tempted to look upon himself as a hypocrite, preaching and teaching doctrines that *seemed* to him utterly unreal. Later, too, we shall see that as she neared the end Sister Theresa, touchingly as she wrote on the beauties of heaven, and her confidence in its coming, plaintively confessed that everything she had set down was merely written on the motive of divine faith, and that her joyous confident aspirations were only what she *wished to feel*, not what she actually felt.

Let us set against these instances of visible sanctity the case of a northern Catholic nation in which such manifestations do not occur to any notable extent, and we may well wonder which temperament shows the more wonderful *charismata*. I mean the case of Ireland. Here we have a Catholic nation, in which the faith has never been dimmed, a nation in which the religious state flourishes perhaps as much as in France, but where conspicuous examples of heroic sanctity similar to those in Latin nations certainly seem less common.

On the other hand, the canker of unbelief and the widespread temptations against faith that seem to bring about the practical apostasy of perhaps almost two-thirds of the population of Latin countries, and that at times seems to make the life of not a few of the remaining faithful remnant an agony of uncertainty, seems almost an unknown thing in Irish Catholic life. In this western land, isolated from even indirect contact with the taint of the Roman Empire practically a whole Catholic people walks surely and joyfully in the light of a faith that carries with it a universal assurance of confident certainty. "Laetus dies hic transeat; pudor sit ut diluculum: *fides velut meridies: crepusculum mens nesciat.*" (Feria II. Ad Laudes). "May this day be spent in holy joy, with modesty pure as the dawn, with faith as bright as the noon-day—but with no oncoming twilight to dim the mind."

Here we have a *charisma* that seems almost staggering in its universality and abundance. Besides this, Ireland takes its place

along with France as the great missionary nation, but its missioners and its *turba magna* of missionary bishops outnumbering those of any other race, have gone forth as conquerors bearing the Gospel to all parts of the earth, because they went not single-handed, but always with a bodyguard of their own apostolic race. So far its missioners in this resembling their own Apostle, have never been martyred. The blood of the martyrs is ever the seed of the church, but the seed was sown in Ireland during the 200 years of persecution, when the blood of the martyrs was shed like water, the numbers of those slain in *odium fidei* being almost too many to enumerate.

An Irish Bishop was asked some time back why in Ireland they were not more eager to seek out and cherish the relics of their martyrs. His reply was, " There is no need to do so," and taking up in his hand some of the earth from his feet, he said—" Behold the relics of our martyrs. There is scarcely a spot anywhere in our land that has not been hallowed by their blood."

We can, therefore, all the more gladly and appreciatively enter into and rejoice at the manifestations of sanctity in these days of ours, and feel that the memory of all God's elect of whatever race is our own special possession in virtue of the Communion of Saints, realising that " there are diversities of graces but the same spirit and diversities of operations, but the same God who worketh all in all . . . but all these things one and the same Spirit worketh, dividing to everyone according as He will." And the Apostle concludes : " Are all workers of miracles ? Have all the grace of healing ? Do all speak with tongues ? Do all interpret ? But be zealous for the better gifts and I show you yet a more excellent way." (I. Cor., xii *passim*). And what way ? What other than the perfect way of charity, the " sure way," the " narrow way " that Sister Theresa entered on so generously, and that she trod to the end.

CHAPTER IV

THE SEED-PLOT OF THE LITTLE FLOWER

We have already noted how sanctity, the joint work of God and of the human soul manifests its all but sacramental nature by its constituent elements of matter, form, and grace. We have already foreshadowed the type of sanctity displayed by Sister Theresa of Lisieux as belonging to that predominant type of union with God, characteristic of the Latin race. We now pass on to consider more closely the raw material of her sanctity in examining the family history of the servant of God.

Just as is the case with genius, so also with sanctity, the saint often seems the one predestined, exceptional product of a long series of previous generations. Carlyle lays stress upon this when he points out that the genius of Shakespeare is really a posthumous flowering of the ages of Faith, as the felled tree often bears leaves and blossom; and in similar manner a genius who is a scourge of the human race like Napoleon, is often the slowly matured type towards which race and circumstances in the designs of God have been tending in converging lines for many generations, until when the hour of judgment has struck for guilty man, the "Scourge of God," "the rod and staff" of God's anger stands ready to take up the two-edged sword.

In lands where widespread defection from the Church on the part of her own children seems such a strange but frequent phenomenon there is always a phalanx of faithful homes where God is honoured and loved and Apostles are bred, and trained.

In all ages it has been the same from the days when the inhabitants of the earth were either "the sons of God" or "the sons of men."

It was the same in the days of the Jewish Kingdom, for Isaias tells us that a *remnant* of Israel "shall lean upon the Lord, the holy One of Israel in truth. The remnant shall be converted, the remnant I say of Jacob to the mighty God" (Isaias x. 20), but adds that this remnant "shall overflow with justice and grace." In the fair land of France this ever faithful remnant by its earnestness and its intrepidity still makes good the claim of France

to the proud title of "eldest daughter of the Church," and maintains a constant succession of Apostles who bear witness to the faith that is in them, not only before their erring countrymen, but unto the very ends of the earth.

Of such a family came Sister Theresa. As becomes a daughter of the Crusaders, who in herself seems to embody once more their generous martial spirit, her paternal grandfather was an officer in the French Army in Napoleon's time. Her father, Louis Joseph Stanislaus Martin was born in 1823 at Bordeaux, the son of a Captain in the garrison there. Soon his parents left Bordeaux for their home at Alençon in Lower Normandy. At the age of 20, Louis Martin begged to be admitted into the Monastery of the Great St. Bernard, but in the designs of God, his reception was postponed and recognizing the divine guidance settled down steadily to business in Alençon, and fifteen years later when he was thirty-five married Mlle. Zélie Guérin also of Alençon, who was twenty-seven years old, and who too had once cherished the desire to enter holy religion, like her own saintly sister, a Benedictine nun at Le Mans.

There were nine children of the union, two being boys and seven girls. The two little boys for whom their parents had prayed so earnestly hoping they might become missionaries, both died in their infancy. The three eldest girls survived, as did also one other, besides the youngest of all, the subject of our study, Marie Françoise Thérèse. A touching detail characteristic of this fervent family was that all the children, both boys and girls were dedicated to our Blessed Lady, the glory and new head of the human race after Her Divine Son, their names being as follows: Marie Louise, always spoken of in the biography as Marie, Marie Pauline, Marie Léonie, Marie Hélène, Marie Joseph Louis, Marie Joseph Jean Baptiste, Marie Céline, Marie Mélanie Thérèse, and lastly Marie Françoise Thérèse.

Such was the spirit of the home that was the seed-plot of the Little Flower. We see that the shadow of the Cross fell early upon it and seldom left it. It seems as if it were a law of the spiritual life that sorrow and bereavement are necessary conditions of every stage of spiritual progress.

If we examine the life of our Blessed Lady nothing strikes us more forcibly than the way in which nothing is given but to be taken away—Joachim and Anna—Joseph—then even her Divine

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LISIEUX

LES BUISSONNETS X THERESA'S ROOM

"*Les Buissonnets* the new house my father had taken seemed delightful. The *belvidere* with its distant view, the front garden laid out in English style and the large kitchen garden at the back, were all delightfully novel to my young mind."

Son leaves her close on Joseph's loss—for a few short years she can still see Him but she must follow Him afar off—and then He dies. He is restored to her but only for a few days and then finally He takes Himself away and leaves her alone once more for the long twelve years as nursing mother to His infant church; then only at last was she united to Him.

But as we look back, we see that each loss is but a preparation for a fresh office, so that she is in succession, Queen of Patriarchs, Queen of Virgins, Queen of Prophets, Queen of Martyrs, Queen of Apostles, and at last rightly the crowned Queen of Angels and Saints.

The little Theresa whose latest representation, idealised though it may be, is, we have every reason for believing, not an unfaithful portrait and who in it bears such a striking resemblance to the Madonna di San Sisto, the most perfect effort of human genius in depicting the Mother of God, entered into the fulness of the family heritage from the beginning, and like her heavenly Mother and patron carried the cross all through her life. It was sorrow that was to wean her heart entirely from the natural brightness and joy of this world, so that the beauty even of nature, of sky, wood, and water no longer appealed to her. It is good for us to be given a glimpse of the tranquil supernatural life though chequered happiness of such a Catholic home, in days like these when the spirit of the neutral state and the so-called neutral school, that is, the ignoring and practical negation of God, seems creeping into families that even profess to be Catholic.

Every morning M. and Mme. Martin were at Mass and Communion. The fasts and abstinence were observed as a matter of course. In spite of the practical neglect of Sunday all round them, and the danger of business competition, the Sunday's rest was strictly observed and a notable part of the day was given to spiritual reading.

Morning and evening prayers were said in common, the crucial test as to the home's Catholicity. In spite of being blessed with the goods of this world strict simplicity was observed, reckless expenditure was avoided and *beforehand* a more than generous proportion of their means was set aside for the claims of God and His Church, the Propagation of the Faith, and the needs of God's poor. The craving for climbing the social ladder that in England so often leads people to live up to the very last penny of their

means, often beyond them, so as to leave nothing for the Church or the poor, and from which luckily France is more free than England, was all the same sternly discouraged by Mme. Martin, who used to say—" How mistaken is the great majority of men ! If they are rich they at once desire honours ; and if these are obtained they are still unhappy ; for never can the heart be satisfied which seeks anything but God." Her only ambition for her children was that they should all go to heaven. " Four of my children," she wrote " are already well settled in life, and the others will go likewise to that heavenly kingdom . . . enriched with greater merit because the combat will have been more prolonged."

Not only was such a man as M. Martin a fervent Catholic, one who was proud to profess his faith, who gloried in showing external reverence to the Blessed Sacrament and God's priests in public, but he had the other sign of the elect, the willingness to give personal service to Christ in the person of the poor, the suffering and even the degraded and this whenever any occasion presented itself. Like a saint of the old law, M. Martin and his wife were blessed by God even in temporal matters and two years before the birth of his youngest child Theresa, he was able to dispose of his jeweller's business in Alençon and retire to 42 Rue St. Blaise, where Theresa was born, on January 2nd. 1873, her good father being then in his fiftieth year.

CHAPTER V

THE SPRING-TIME OF THE LITTLE FLOWER.

So far we have dealt with what modern science would call the pre-natal influences at work moulding the character of Marie Thérèse Martin. Resembling so many of the typical continental saints, she comes of the mixed Mediterranean and Northern race that unites in one character the ardour and precocious intelligence of the Latin, the practical common-sense of the Teuton, and in Western France especially the mysticism, or rather shall we say, the natural spiritual apprehension of the Celt. From all sources she inherits from long lines of Catholic ancestors the Catholic faith undiluted and untainted by heresy, no small start in the way of perfection—" the blessings of thy father are strengthened with the blessings of his fathers." (Gen. xlix. 26). Not only does she come from a Catholic race, but from one that, in all former times has been a noble generous and chivalrous people where the interests of God and His Church are concerned—a race which, for the love of God and His Christ left their own fair land and whitened the plains of Syria with their bones striving to regain for Christendom the Sepulchre of our Lord and the land trodden by His Feet—and from the *fine fleur* of this race, the still faithful *remnant* after the wholesale apostasy of the 18th. century comes forth Marie Thérèse Martin, almost a second Joan of Arc and full of her intrepid martial spirit, the spirit of her own crusading ancestors, as the Deborah of our latter days to encourage and yet lead to victory the rising generation to whom she will give a share of her own heroic faith and splendid constancy.

So now we see her started on her earthly pilgrimage ; her own modern day crusade as champion of Christ her Lord and King. Two days after her birth (strangely soon in such cold bleak wintry weather, object those whom heretical taint or surroundings blind to the pressing need of the supernatural) on January 4th. 1873, was Marie Françoise Thérèse Martin baptised in the parish

church of Notre Dame, Alençon, her godmother being her eldest sister Marie Louise. Thus fitly, as soon as possible after her birth was she enrolled in the army of God, "girt about with truth and having the breastplate of justice, and taking the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the spirit." (Eph. vi. 14).

She is now started on her pilgrimage, with her own individual character and her own eternal destiny. She was we are told the child of prayer, of long and fervent supplications that God would even at the eleventh hour bless the home with a son and heir who would worthily end his long line of generous Catholic ancestors by being a priest and an Apostle to carry the faith to the nations that sit in darkness and the shadow of death. M. and Mme. Martin lived lives of faith, and though their prayers seemed unheard, yet faith told them such entirely supernatural petitions could not go unanswered. They were never in this world to know how superabundantly their prayer was heard.

As is generally the case with the Saints, both natural and supernatural forces were actively at work even before birth in preparing and shaping the future Saint, but once started on her way, divine grace and circumstances prepared by God, will act and react on her soul and character.

As was fitting, the early years were years of sunshine, surrounded with that constant and loving care, deprived of which the future character can scarcely escape being warped. Most of the Saints in token of their being sane and normal human beings have been shielded in this way; St. Peter Damian is the only instance that comes to one's mind of a saint abandoned in infancy possibly because God required a rough forceful instrument for such troubled times.

We are prepared to find, even in her babyhood little Theresa's real character soon manifesting itself; and as we have been led to expect it is ardent, energetic and exceptionally strong willed. She will never leave her mother's side; she will not even go upstairs without calling her mother step by step and insisting on being answered—she is impulsive, open, intelligent, and stubborn; but once her feelings are touched, her repentance for her faults is instantaneous and most generous. The witness to all this is a letter of her own mother who nevertheless loved her most tenderly. We must remember that what is written refers to a child

of only three years old: "Celine is entirely inclined to be good; as to our little puss (furet) it is very hard to say how she will turn out, she is still so little and heedless. She is a very bright child, but she is much less gentle than her sister, and she is headstrong to such a degree that scarcely any one can master her. When she says 'no' nothing will make her give in; one could put her down in the cellar all day without getting her to say 'yes.' She would sooner sleep there." Then as ever little Theresa was a strong, forceful personality. In those happy unclouded days there was already at work one of the great influences that was to spiritualize and bring into subjection this proud impetuous character, the supernatural atmosphere and teaching of her home. Even by the time she is three years old the heavenly country is for Theresa her real home. Deeply as she loves her, yet the very best happiness she can wish her mother when she kisses her, is that she should die soon and go to heaven. In the providential way in which she is to be led, she will be taken at her word, and the shock of that loss will be the groundwork upon which her sanctity will be based. Besides making her realise the supernatural, the home teaching also was showing her how to overcome her faults, and the good example of her sisters and their ideals, made the little one anxious to emulate them. Thus still while little Theresa is only three years old we have her mother writing again—"Even Theresa wishes to take her turn at making sacrifices. Marie has given her little sisters a string of beads on purpose to count their acts of virtue. . . . The quaintest thing possible, however, is to see Theresa putting her hand in her pocket dozens of times a day, to pull a bead along the string every time she makes a sacrifice."

But the strong ardent nature would often peep out, and once being asked to choose something pretty from a basket of trifles, after a moment's consideration she put out her hand saying—"I choose everything." In other words she was never given to doing things by halves. The seed-time was not to last long—it was not without reason that little Theresa was the Benjamin, or rather the Benoni (the child of sorrow), of this fervent united home. Swiftly and without warning fell the blow that was to prove the determining factor in the shaping of the little one's destiny. The shock of sorrow was the instrument that was to mould her sanctity—no ordinary grief for loss was this to be, but a sharp bitter pang, a bolt from the blue, that falling on the

tender budding mind will leave its abiding mark upon it, and blighting it from the natural standpoint, will refine it and divert all its energies to securing the Kingdom where sorrow and death never enter. Thus we begin to get an insight into the real nature of the mystery, that it is those whom God loves He chastises—Theresa was to attain happiness, but her beatitude was to be that of "beati qui lugent"—"blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted." (Math. v. 5) The path to joy lies ever through the vale of weeping.

CHAPTER VI

THE BEGINNING OF SORROWS.

It is quite possible that, but for our Divine Lord choosing Theresa as a vessel of election, and carrying out His design by rending her tender heart in her very infancy, she might have developed along ordinary lines and lived an ordinary earnest steady-going pious life like that of the mother whose clear balanced practical mind she seems to have inherited. The initial blow that seems in the designs of God to have diverted the whole course of her subsequent life was her mother's death.

As we have said, there seems reason for believing it was a bolt from the blue. All so far was smiling on this fortunate family. Financial anxiety was a thing of the past, leisured ease was their portion—it was true, losses and disappointments had tried the hearts of the saintly father and mother, but even her sorrows had their silver lining for the woman of strong faith who rejoiced in the assurance that already four of her little flock had inherited the heavenly kingdom.

It is pathetic to read Sister Theresa's subsequent memories of the undimmed joy of those days: "How happy," she exclaims, "I was at that age! Not only was I beginning to enjoy life, but goodness itself attracted me." . . . "How quickly, alas, those sunny years of childhood passed away, and what sweet and tender impressions they have left on my mind! I call to mind the Sunday walks when my dear mother always came with us; and I can still feel the deep and poetic impression made on my childish heart by the sight of the fields bright with field-poppies, cornflowers, and marguerites. Even at that age I loved far-spreading views, spacious depths, and noble trees; in a word, all nature won my heart and raised my soul to heaven. . . . . Truly everything on earth smiled on me; I found flowers strewn at my feet everywhere, and my bright disposition also had its share in making life pleasant. But a new phase of life was soon to begin."

Here we have a soul, if ever there was one, fashioned for

suffering. Even in her very babyhood gifted beyond her years, she already has the seeing eye, the keen observation and discrimination that takes in "far-spreading sunlit views." Her little soul thrills in response to the appeal of landscape like that of the born artist—she feels herself part of the glorious living pageant, which like an endless paean of praise wells up ceaselessly around the throne of God.

The fact that she was not alone in this great wide-spreading world of beauty intensified her joy. She was the queen of her little court, but were not those who loved her the special friends, the chosen intimates of the Great King Himself? Oh, how glorious are the memories of a happy childhood, the days when the very heavens seem to touch the earth—but alas, sooner or later, having done their work such days must pass away, never to return—and with their passing, pales the golden radiance that lit up land and sea and skies—and the naked truth comes home to us that here we have no abiding city—we are but strangers and pilgrims—the sky that was once so bright becomes as brass, and the broad stretches of earth once so smiling become as iron beneath our feet. So we pass on to the goal, with heavy, weary footsteps, our eyes fixed on Him alone Who, when all things else fade, remains always the self-same, Jesus the Author and Finisher of our Faith—Jesus yesterday and to-day and the same for ever.

In later years Sister Theresa confessed that though she had at last found peace and content, the beauties of God's visible creation no longer thrilled her even in retrospect, but the memory of her home life was always an inspiration and an abiding joy. She rejoiced to think that a saint after her own heart, like the Blessed Théophane Vénard, resembled her in this, and she added with emphasis she found it hard to imagine how it could be otherwise.

Thus touchingly does she bring to an end the record of these few poor fleeting years of peace and joy—"Being destined to be so shortly the spouse of our Lord it was necessary I should suffer *from my childhood*. Just as the early spring flowers begin to bud under the snow and blossom at the first ray of the sun, so also the Little Flower whose memories I am recalling, had to pass through the winter of trial, and to have her tender cup filled with the dew of tears."

For a young family the shock of the loss of a loving mother

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LISIEUX

PORTAL OF CHAPEL OF CARMEL

"It was while going along with my father for his afternoon walk that I first went into the Chapel of the Carmel. 'Look, little Queen,' he said to me, 'behind that big grating there are holy nuns who are always praying to Almighty God.'"

is a heavy blow that always leaves an abiding mark on the minds of the desolate little ones. The depth of the impression varies according to the character or age of the child. Most English children of Theresa's age would have minds too immature to realise what had happened. In Theresa's case there was combined with her infantile delicacy of organisation, the thoughtfulness and power of observation of a child more than twice her age with us. The invasion of her sheltered home-life by death struck an icy thrill through her little being, not yet sufficiently developed to resist this shock, as perhaps was the case with her sisters. It must not be assumed that they escaped unscathed—far from it, but one can imagine that the blow fell with most crushing force on the youngest.

Far be it from us to venture to dwell on a sorrow that is still so sacred and that has not ceased to be a sword of grief for those to whom it must still seem so little remote. In the designs of God, Who makes use of such happenings as His instruments, possibly there may have been certain circumstances connected with the loss of her mother that fell under Theresa's notice, simply because being so little, no notice was taken of her presence. Thus after explaining how she and Celine, the next youngest sister, were taken away to a friend's house during the illness, she describes her shrinking presence in the sick-room while Extreme Unction was being given—all the details of which she can see at any time—and concludes her account with a very significant phrase—"My dear mother left this world on August 28th. 1877, in her 46th. year. The day following her death my father took me in his arms and said 'Come and kiss your dear little mother for the last time.' As for me, in silence I put my lips to the icy-cold forehead of my darling mother. I do not remember having cried much. I did not tell anyone about the long and deep thoughts that filled my heart. I looked on and listened in silence, but all the same *I saw many things they would rather have hidden from me.*"

Thus was the poor, gentle, tender little heart broken, as far as taking any further real interest in this world was concerned, and possibly the wound was deeper in her case than with the others. God's dealing with His poor helpless creatures is always a mystery. Sometimes it seems as if the good, just because they have faith and trust and love, have laid on their shoulders a cross that permits of no ray of hope—they can only bow down and adore.

We with our robust practical minds, I fear may scarcely realise how poignant is the sorrow caused to a highly strung and delicately poised southern temperament by the ordeal of death and parting. To any who wish to realise this I almost shrink from recommending a perusal of François Coppée's "Book of Pity and Death" that to a harrowing degree gives an insight into the experiences and mental processes of a tender-hearted French lad who loses a much loved relative. Most of us would I fear, pronounce it morbid, and would regret reading it. I read it many years ago, but nothing would now make me read it again, and I rejoice to think that the natural dimming of memory has blurred all its details.

One of the merciful necessities of life is that duties must be fulfilled and the daily round followed even by hearts that are breaking. So after the cortege to their parish church, the Requiem Mass and Absolution with all the local customs and traditional chant that have come down unchanged from mediæval times; the defile of all the members of the united families before the body, sprinkling it with holy water, and the long drawn out touching procession of relatives, friends, and acquaintances to the cemetery, all united in faith and sympathy with the mourners, M. Martin and his little ones came back to the empty home. The little ones Celine and Theresa found each a mother in one of their elder sisters, and in time the routine of life was resumed.

Humanly speaking, some certainly of M. Martin's daughters would have become religious in any case, but the shock of their recent loss and possibly the circumstances attending it, have given them all a distaste for life in the world, where the cup of happiness is dashed from the lips so very soon and with such little warning—and much as they are attached to their loving and devoted father, both they and he, in a characteristic spirit of immolation seem equally intent that they should become brides of the heavenly King, and devote the whole of their lives to intercession and seeking the heavenly kingdom. It is in this unity of ideal on the part of both father and children that we get a glimpse of the supernatural character of this home. Later when in Lisieux, while M. Martin was taking his little Theresa for an afternoon walk she first saw the Carmelite Convent, with its chapel, and pointing it out to her the father said: "Look little Queen, behind that big grating there are holy nuns who are always praying to Almighty God."

We can gauge the terrible nature of the father's sorrow that he judged it well for his own sake and for that of his daughters to leave Alençon sanctified by so many memories and the earthly resting place of her who was dearer to them all than life, and to go to Lisieux, where his late wife's brother lived. There, he and they might at times in the company of their relatives, and cheered by their affection, forget their loss and try to take up the threads of life again.

We can see the good effects of this change on Marie Thérèse who enjoyed the journey, eagerly welcomed the society of her little cousins, and was delighted at the novelty and beautiful grounds of their new house "Les Buissonnets" in the pleasant outskirts of the town. In the open surroundings of this pleasant home, playing about on the lawn or in the gardens, and going fishing with her father, the stricken little mind recovered in some measure from the shock of its loss, so that on the surface its heart expanded, and as she touchingly explains, "I smiled on life once more."

But in many ways this was only on the surface. Turning to her own account she says, "on the day of my mother's funeral began the second and most sorrowful period of my existence, especially after she whom I had chosen as my second mother entered the Carmel. This period lasted from the time I was four and a half years old until my fourteenth year when I got back my childish buoyancy, while at the same time, entering more fully into a realisation of the seriousness of life."

"I must tell you that after my mother's death my naturally happy disposition completely changed. Instead of being lively and demonstrative as I had been, I became timid, shy, and extremely sensitive; a look was enough to make me burst into tears. I could not bear to be noticed or to meet strangers, and I was only at ease in my own family circle."

Telling of how later she went along with her father fishing, she gives us further details of this tendency towards melancholy. "Sometimes I had a try at it myself with my own little rod, but usually I preferred to sit a little apart on the flower-strewn grass, thinking deep thoughts, and without knowing what meditation meant, I really was rapt in prayer. Sounds from afar off, the murmuring of the wind were all that I heard. At times a few stray snatches of airs from a military band in the

town reached me and imparted a tinge of gentle melancholy to my heart; earth seemed but a place of exile, and I dreamt of heaven."

"The afternoon quickly went by, and it was soon time to go home, but before packing up the tackle I used to have the little lunch that I had brought in my small basket. But alas, the attractive jam sandwiches that my sisters had got ready for me looked so different. Instead of their deep rich colour, I now saw in its place, only a faded pink, stale looking and dried up Then earth seemed to me sadder than ever, and I realised that only in heaven would joy be unclouded."

Here I think we can detect in the natural order evidences of shock and slight melancholia, instruments made use of by God to lead on and detach the ingenuous little soul from placing her happiness in any created thing. About this time, too, she had a vision of her dear father limping along like one stricken with his head veiled—this occurred at Lisieux while her father was away for the day at Alençon. As a little baby she had wished her mother to die and go to heaven, but now she says—"In those days I had not the courage even to think that Papa could die, without being terrified." Should he die, she must die along with him. Later she was taken to the sea, where the Channel with its generally gloomy northern horizon made a deep impression on her. One evening she relates, "at the hour when the sun seems to bathe itself in the waste of the waters, leaving behind it a glowing furrow, I sat with Pauline on an isolated rock and gazed for long on this golden furrow which she told me was an image of grace enlightening the path of faithful souls here below. Then I pictured my heart as a little skiff with a graceful white sail in the midst of the furrow, and there and then made up my mind never to let it drift out of the sight of Jesus, so that it might sail peacefully and quickly towards the heavenly shore." (Cf. *Frontispiece.*)

CHAPTER VII

THE SECOND SORROW.

It is a commonplace of warfare that unseasoned soldiers are, as a rule, useless for practical work until they have received their baptism of fire. It is not that they are cowardly—if anything, at times they are inclined to be foolhardy, but the sight of blood, the horrible nameless disfigurements of what only a moment before were human bodies, in the full tide of life, and especially the shock of the sudden snatching away out of life of a human being from the side of often life-long friends, all seems so cruel, so utterly outrageous, that the mind for the moment is paralysed with horror, and all but loses its power of volition. The eloquent gaps in the circle of friends and comrades after the battle casts a gloom as of night over the spirits of all—the soul is crushed under the weight of sorrow—it sees its own probable fate mirrored before it; there is no time for regrets however; duties have to be performed; the gaps must perforce be filled up without a shadow of apparent regret—the plan of campaign must be carried out remorselessly. Then, suddenly, from the welter of glazed horror that at first paralysed the mind and the pressure of circumstances, emerges the seasoned soldier. He could have been evolved in no other way. He has been sated with horrors, till they have palled on his mind—probably he has lost friends whose very existence and comradeship had much to do with making life worth living—but inexorable necessity forces him on—so he recks not whether death comes his way or not—possibly he hopes it may come, provided it comes swiftly—for he shrinks from the thought of his home-coming, and the dreary blank wastes of life ahead of him. He then becomes an effective part of that terrible engine, a seasoned army, whose members fear not and hope not. They will often in the future wish to draw a veil over the terrible past—but none of them will ever be the same again. A sort of moral tornado has torn its way across the mind and soul, uprooting all the gentler fibres of love and pity instinct in human nature—

but for all that, to the end they keep the gift they have purchased so dear—they are trained, reliable soldiers.

The doctor, the nurse and the priest, in their own separate ways, undergo similar ordeals before they are competent and reliable representatives of their callings. It is the ordeal of shock that imprints on the soul the character that cannot be lost.

From the beginning we can trace in God's dealings with His creatures, both in history as in the Sacred Scriptures, the invariable use made by Him of the psychology of shock in the progressive formation of the Saint. Sacred Scripture and the Lives of the Saints, if read sympathetically, furnish a long *catena* of such instances, illustrating the words—" for whom the Lord loveth He chastiseth : He scourgeth every son whom He receiveth" (Heb. xii. 6), not only once, but time after time, and the Apostle gives the reason : " Now all chastisement for the present indeed seemeth not to bring with it joy, but sorrow ; but *afterwards* it will yield to them who are exercised by it, the most peaceable fruit of justice." (Heb. xii. 11).

Sometimes these blows seem the result of chance happenings ; at other times they all seem to flow one from the other, as cause and effect, so that at the end, the life seems to take on an uncanny unity all through, the outcome of a seemingly blind, remorseless and intelligent force called by the Greeks, in their ignorance, *ananke,* but in reality the work of divine Providence.

We have seen how the bright, playful little Theresa, who was to be sealed as a vessel of election, was early marked with the cross. For the moment the little one seems to make an effort to rally, to make believe—to forget her loss in the love and tender care of her " little mother," her elder sister, Pauline, who, though but a child herself, showed a wisdon beyond her years in the gentle firmness of her training. It was true she and her sisters showered affection on the desolate little baby, with her wistful appeal for a mother's care and love. " Indeed," she says, " to be spoilt was a real need for me. It was of the greatest advantage to the Little Flower to strike its tender roots deeper and deeper into the dearly loved soil of home, since it could find nowhere else the nourishment necessary for its existence." But for all that, these few years were but a respite, to in some measure fortify the chosen one to face the blows that were still in store, many of them tracing their origin to the first great loss.

The touching routine of the home, however, still goes on as usual. Little Theresa says her prayers every morning kneeling between her two elder sisters. Next came her lessons, given by Pauline, her "little mother," and then the little one was free to go and console her broken-hearted father. In the morning she would play in the garden with all her little interests—the "thousand and one interests" she used to call them—her little experiments in making cordials from small seeds and the bark of trees, her flower-beds, her little altars in out-of-the-way corners—in a word, the pathetic efforts of an orphaned little one trying to find occupation and distraction for herself, and with her delicate sympathy, child as she is, trying to lighten the burden of those others whom she feels suffer as much as she does. Then followed her afternoon walk with her father, their visit to the Blessed Sacrament in one or other of the churches. Later in the evening would follow a game of draughts, the reading of some interesting book by one of her sisters, Theresa sitting the while on her father's knee, who afterwards would rock her to sleep with one of the old traditional French melodies. Last of all would come the night prayers upstairs, after which the little one would be put to bed by her sisters, after being lovingly assured by them that she had been a good little girl all day, that God was really pleased with her, that the angels would watch over her while she was left by herself all alone in the dark for the night, and then her sisters' kiss would bring the day to a close.

There is every reason to believe that a continuance of this peaceful, happy, tranquil life—the little one the while basking in the affection of her father and sisters—would, in the long run, have healed the bruised heart and restored tone to the stricken mind. It would, no doubt, have been a slow and tedious process in consequence of the exceptional character of the shock received by Theresa at her mother's death. As she says herself: "I have not yet told you how Celine and I altered when we came to Lisieux. She had now become the little romp, full of mischief, while Theresa had turned into a quiet, gentle little girl far too inclined to tears." Here we see Celine, who was over six years old at her mother's death, in child-like fashion, had shaken off the obsession of the past. Not so, however, for some reason with Theresa. Amongst us a child of three and a half years old, with undeveloped mind and so understanding little, would have suffered less than an elder

sister. From four to fourteen years was this early stage of her existence to be a cross-strewn path, instead of being, as with most, a time of cheerful, joyous peace.

We shall see how the natural process of mental recovery, by the growing of fresh brain-tissue in normal, happy, healthful surroundings, was in the designs of God checked. This was brought about by piling cross upon cross, so that at the age of fourteen, when at length she emerged from the region of natural gloom caused by sorrow on sorrow, we find the ordeal ended by detaching her from any further reliance on, or expectation of, fleeting natural joy on this earth.

The second sorrow that fell upon the unhealed rawness of the little one's first great loss was the loss of her "little mother," her sister Pauline, who left home to become a postulant in the Carmelite Convent at Lisieux.

The shock of this second great loss seems to have finally shattered, at a prematurely early age, in the little one's mind the hope which she had cherished, as all children do cherish till they are much older, that here on earth we have an abiding dwelling place.

She was just beginning to settle down in the peaceful home surroundings and to find her interests and happiness in them, and, childlike, to assume that all her surroundings would go on unchanged, certainly as long as she was at home. At the departure of her own Pauline, her own "little mother"—a blow so cruel, so unlooked for, and so unnecessary, as it seemed to the desolate little one, she seems to have lost her hold upon life, and thus quite early to have learnt the lesson that existence is not a state, so much as a swiftly flowing stream—or, as she says her father used to tell her, "time is thy barque, not thy dwelling place." Before this blow fell we can see how her mind was beginning to settle down. She pictured herself as always possessing the "little mother" whom she had chosen, and used to tell her that she would love to go away with her to a far off desert, where they would live all by themselves. The elder sister, humouring her, said that she too had the same hope, and when Theresa was big enough, they would start off on their quest together. With the preternatural seriousness of childhood, little Theresa looked on this as a settled thing, and had no further misgivings about the future. Imagine then her dismay when she heard Pauline calmly

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EVENING ON THE RIVER TOUQUES, NEAR LISIEUX.

"They were glorious days for me whenever my 'beloved King' took me on a fishing expedition along with him. Sometimes I had a try at fishing myself with a little line of my own, but more often than not I preferred to sit a little apart on the flowery mead thinking deep thoughts."

discussing with Marie, her elder sister, the date of her entry into the Carmel of Lisieux.

It is hard to realise the extent to which this fresh loss crushed down the tender, bruised soul of the orphaned little one. She had learnt the lesson of death, and had at last reconciled herself to bow her head to the immutable decrees of our Lord, who giveth and taketh away; but she recked not of crosses and desolation coming from the hands of her own familiar friends with whom she had held sweet converse. In an instant the little house of cards which she had so wistfully and with such resignation built up, came tumbling down for apparently no reason at all. She was only an infant, but thus early and by these providential happenings did God begin fashioning the soul of His chosen servant, checking at the very beginning the natural instinct of her affectionate nature to lean on creatures. Henceforth her motto would be: "Et nunc quae est expectatio mea nonne Dominus." (Ps. xxxviii. 11). "And now from whom do I look for anything but the Lord."

But this victory was not gained without a struggle. It is heart-rending to read the words she wrote years afterwards, describing all she had to go through in schooling herself to accept this new loss. As she pathetically commented later, "before reaching our Father's home in heaven I had to go through many partings on this earth." And again looking back on her life as a whole, she notices: "I have never been left anything in this world that I cared for." Even when in later years she recalls the unutterable bitterness of the collapse of the new life she had pieced together so laboriously, we almost shudder at the recital, and are scarcely surprised it reached its climax in a mental crisis which humanly speaking might have proved irremediable but for what appears to have been a miraculous cure.

Let her own words be once more our guide as to what she went through: "How can I tell the anguish of my heart? In a flash life stretched out before me as it really is, full of sufferings and never ending partings, and I shed many a bitter tear. In those days I knew nothing of the joy of sacrifice; I was weak—so weak that I look on it as a great grace that I was able to bear such a trial, one seemingly so much beyond my strength, without dying." She at last clutches at one straw—perhaps Pauline can take her along with her; but though she is encouraged to hope for the future, she learns that little girls of nine cannot enter

convents. To save her from the first wrench of parting, she was not allowed to accompany her " little mother " to bid her farewell at the enclosure. She was taken to Mass instead by her aunt and sisters ; at the Mass she says—" We were bathed in tears, and people gazed at us in astonishment when we entered the church, but that did not stop our crying—I even wondered how the sun could go on shining."

One can well imagine that all this will seem to be very exaggerated—but we must bear in mind that given a sensitive nature, joined with rare and precocious intelligence, and a mind that, as we have seen, was only just recovering from the paralysing effects of some exceptional shock, a parting that to our more sturdy national temperament would seem one of the everyday, but regrettable arrangements that make up life, was for poor little forlorn Theresa the rough shattering of her only ideal of a merely tolerable existence. It stands to reason that where sensitiveness is non-existent or blunted, mental suffering cannot be a means of purification, but its place has to be taken by physical pain or worldly reverses—but where such capacity exists for acute mental suffering, very frequently the agonies of renunciation and the lessons of detachment can all be gone through with reference to comparatively insignificant objects. After all, even those objects which men reckon most desirable are at the best mere trifles in the sight of God. The outstanding lesson of the whole of this extraordinary life is the way in which it makes manifest the " equality of opportunity " for all, in so far as the service and love of our Lord is considered. The opportunity of doing what the world considers *great things*, in no way makes either for or against sanctity. A man may have great and important works to carry through, and may succeed in them, and yet in the sight of God accomplish them most imperfectly, through his good motives being mixed with low and ignoble natural incentives, such as pride, the grasping at power, vanity, love of excitement and of natural activity, the great bane of these days.

On the other hand, a chosen soul like that of Theresa Martin, may be set aside as a vessel of election from her childhood, tried like gold in the furnace and purified to an almost incredible extent, and yet the material happenings that are made use of to accomplish this work, taken apart from the personal equation of the chosen

soul, are of the most ordinary character. The really striking thing, however, about the mental processes of the subject of this study, that are set before us so vividly and so minutely, is the way in which they seem to illustrate and put into practice, one by one and in orderly sequence, the lessons of our blessed Lord's teaching.

In the quiet peaceful home at Lisieux, there enters thus early the sword of the Gospel teaching :—" I came to bring, not peace, but the sword," the sword that will sever definitely what seems at the moment tranquil human happiness and the unity of family life, the sword that implies that perhaps the cruellest and bitterest sorrows must come from the free act of those that are nearest and dearest, who weep while they wound, but who feel they have no option when He calls Who says :—" He that loveth father or mother. . . son or daughter more than Me, is not worthy of Me." (Matt. x. 37.)

It was in this most vulnerable part of her nature Theresa was wounded. If there are those who question the extreme seriousness of the blow let them read her naive account of the subsequent happenings and see if it be not possible for a soul wounded in this way to bleed to death—a death from which it would seem she was only snatched by Him who would do great things in her. Theresa was taken to see her beloved elder sister the evening of the day the blow fell. Let us see what happened. It is the old story over again of her first loss ; she is stunned by the blow and seems insensible—she cannot take it in—she sees her sister but has nothing to say ; her brain refuses to act—shock has her in its grip once more ; the surroundings, too, are so different, she can no longer nestle close to her " little mother," the *grille* is between them and her dress seems strange ; she also has to sit quiet and listen while her elders discuss serious matters—how could she, like in the old days, tell her " little mother " all that was in her heart, so the " few minutes with her at the end of the family visits . . . . were passed in tears, and I went away with my heart torn with grief."

When this happened time after time, the iron at length entered her soul—it was worse than death—Pauline was still in life, but she was more lost than if death had taken her. Then descended despair on the poor little mind, and she said from the depths of the heart that cried out in vain for one to comfort her, " Pauline is lost to me."

It is easy to cheapen and to question the reality of this anguish, but we must view it all in the light of the circumstances—the temperament of the child, and all she had already gone through, known perhaps only to God; and, bearing in mind too her undoubted exceptional intelligence, we may well ask ourselves what the little mind must have endured during those last weeks of the year 1882 after she was parted from her "little mother" in the beginning of October. In a word, her mind gave way under the strain. The trouble began in a normal way with acute headaches a few weeks after the entry of Pauline into the Carmelite Convent. They were at first bearable, but constant, a sign of serious trouble. By Easter 1883, the crisis came. Her father had gone to Paris, and Theresa, with Celine, were left with their uncle, M. Guérin. He, poor man, in all innocence, talking with little Theresa alone one evening, naturally began to speak to her about his sister (her mother) and the old days, thinking he would keep alive in the little one affection for the mother whom he thought she would scarcely remember. To his surprise, she was more moved even than he was, and began to cry bitterly. Her passion of anguish was so apparent, the uncle became alarmed—he made every effort to distract her, and told her of all the plans he had made to give her and Celine a good time during the holidays, but all to no avail. "That very evening," she continues, "my headache became acute, and I was seized with a strange shivering that lasted all night." After these *prodromata* there followed a serious illness. She was nursed back at length to convalescence just in time to be present at her sister's clothing. It was an hour of happiness, as she was allowed to see and embrace her "little mother," but it soon came to an end with the agony of parting once more. By the next day a serious relapse occurred, or rather the strain, which was too much for her in her state of convalescence, brought on a chronic nervous disease, a sequel to the acute attack from which she had only just recovered. She was delirious for days at a time, although conscious of all that was happening. This was succeeded by attacks of extreme exhaustion and torpor, followed by hallucinations. "What fears the devil inspired! I remember it still. I was afraid of everything; my bed seemed to be surrounded by frightful precipices; nails in the wall took the terrifying appearances of long fingers, shrivelled and blackened by fire, making me cry out in terror."

Her father, uncle and aunt, her sisters and cousins were in despair. The key to the mystery of the sad silent shrinking little one was probably hidden from them—least of all did they suspect that they were witnessing the early stages of that way of desolation and crucifixion along which our Lord was already leading His little spouse, so that she might be made to resemble Him and His blessed Mother, and that she should fill up in her own person "those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ." (Col. i. 24.)

CHAPTER VIII

OUR LADY'S SMILE.

The darkest hour of the night is ever that before the dawn. Our Lord was, at last, about to give His " little plaything " a rest, and for a time a respite from suffering. In spiritual things, as in the natural order, there are periods of growth and periods of rest. Ever since the age of three has He kept the baby soul of His little servant on the anvil, fashioning it with blow upon blow. We must remember she is only ten years old, and that her sensitiveness, which was the occasion of her exceptional suffering, also tended to diminish her powers of resistance. It would seem, humanly speaking, as if the end could not be far off : either death would soon come to end the little one's martyrdom, or, what was almost more terrible to contemplate, the permanent clouding of the reason, through the little brain having given way under a strain that might have broken down an adult. The poor heart-broken father was in despair—Marie, Leonie and Celine, her sisters, redoubled their care and did all they could by loving affection to lift the cloud, but all to no avail. At last, at the suggestion of M. Martin, a novena of Masses was asked for at the shrine of our Lady of Victories in Paris. Soon the crisis came—on the Sunday during the novena little Theresa, who now could never bear her sister Marie out of her sight, called for her—on Marie's arrival she failed to recognise her. Marie and her sisters, fearing the blow they dreaded had at length fallen, fell upon their knees by the bedside of their little sister and turning towards the statue of our Lady, entreated her to give them back their beloved one. Their cry of faith forced the gates of heaven. Theresa, finding no help on earth and nearly dead with pain, turned towards our Lady's statue beside her bed, begging her loving Mother to take pity upon her. Suddenly, she tells us, the statue seemed to come to life and grow beautiful with an indescribable divine beauty. The expression of our Lady's face was ineffably sweet, tender and compassionate. She smiled upon the suffering little one, who was touched to the very depths of her soul. Then all her pain vanished, while tears

of gratitude fell from her eyes. For the moment the sun came out and shone upon her little soul as it does on a spring day between the showers. "Theresa was cured," she says "the Little Flower was going to come to life again—a bright ray from its radiant sun had warmed it and set it free once for all from its cruel enemy. 'The winter is past, the rain is over and gone' (Cant. ii. 11), and our Lady's Little Flower grew up so strong that five years later it bloomed on the fertile mountain of Carmel."

In this relief there was only one danger: possibly, the little one might feel elated at her cure having been accompanied by what appeared to her a special mark of our Lady's favour. But our Lord's watchful care extended even to this. Her secret had been surprised by the watchful eyes of her eldest sister, who obtained from her an avowal of what she felt she had seen. The good news of the cure and its attendant circumstances soon reached her "little mother" in the convent. At her next visit the little one had to answer endless questions, prompted by the loving and pious curiosity of the community. The incident then, to the exquisitely refined mind of Theresa, lost its bloom—her joy was turned into bitterness, and for four years the remembrance of the grace, instead of causing complacency was a source of minor, though real, pain. Eventually, four years later on her visit to Paris, Theresa in the Sanctuary of our Lady of Victories, at her Mother's feet once again found peace. As a consequence of her cure, however, she soon was able to go and see her "little mother" once more at the Carmel. They had both suffered much, and, as a result of all she had gone through, poor little Theresa already, baby as she was, began to learn the lesson of detachment from the natural affection that had cost her so dear. "What happy moments they were for us both," she comments, "we had so much to say—we had both suffered so much. As for me, I could scarcely speak. My heart was too full for words."

CHAPTER IX

THE FIRST ESPOUSALS.

It was during this season of peace our Lord first visited the heart of His little spouse in the Holy Communion. Seldom had any of God's saints in infancy gone through such a searching preparation. In considering the normal, but extraordinarily precocious stages of union with God in the still in many ways almost baby mind of Theresa, it is well thus early to give some indication of the type of perfection we shall find later on in her. Star differeth from star in glory, and in a similar manner do God's saints. In each different temperament, diverse graces of vocation combine to produce a different type of sanctity. Some are active, others contemplative—some work miracles—others accomplish marvellous works of charity—others are made use of to show forth to men wonderful mystical signs, such as ecstasies, bilocation, and the stigmata. All these things one and the same Lord worketh, dividing to each one according as He will.

Another class of saints stands apart, remarkable only for its want of singularity : Our Blessed Lady may be looked upon as its type and exemplar. They are often the hidden Saints, the saints of the common, everyday life—the saints, the beauty of whose lives brings down many an unsuspected blessing and mercy on a faithless world ; the saints whose sanctity would remain unknown till the last day but for some chance undesigned lifting of the veil, as in the case of the subject of our biography. We owe much, therefore, to the wise Mother Prioress who put Sister Theresa under obedience to write the story of her life—" much, had she not spoken, would have been dumb ; not dead, but living voiceless," known only to God.

Father Faber, in a striking passage, speaks of the life of every human soul, no matter how undistinguished, as having in it the material of an epic poem, or, as another has it, " a mystic unfathomable song," and enlarging later on this thought he loves to dwell on the idea that all the entrancing beauty of earth, of mountain valley, wood and water, all slumbering peacefully in the glorious

LISIEUX

SIDE AISLE OF SAINT-PIERRE

"As our sittings were in a side-chapel a long way off from the pulpit we used to have to come down and try to find places in the nave for the sermon."

sunshine, is as nothing to the ineffable unimaginable beauty of one simple soul peacefully serving God in humility and singleness of heart

But for her providential revelation of herself Sister Theresa would have been one of these ordinary hidden saints, leading most perfectly the ordinary everyday life of faith in the loving performance of ordinary everyday duties. As we follow her life year by year, we are to expect no accounts of visions, ecstacies, miracles or other extraordinary favours. To the end she will live out her life on the beaten track of faith and enjoy the beatitude of those who have not seen, yet have believed. There is equality of opportunity for all in the service of God—no great conspicuous deeds are necessary in order to attain great sanctity. A great leader of God's people like Moses, who lives in an atmosphere of great events, working miracles daily, instituting covenants and priesthoods, and ruling God's people, may, in the performance of these great deeds, be found wanting through slight imperfections as compared with the little soul who does little deeds perfectly.

It is, therefore, as St. Paul says, not a case of one favoured soul bearing away the crown, but the prize is open to all, without reference to the course, whatever the struggle, whatever the test may be. It is open to all to be " a faithful, unconquerable one that is the question of questions." And when a life of simple everyday duties has thus been spent consistently, unremittingly, seeking God alone, continually making such little sacrifices as the opportunities of such a life may afford, such a life in its " free flowing outlines, grand in the sincerity of its simplicity, in its epic melody," may well seem modelled on the flawless perfection of her the stainless, sinless one, whose hidden life of peerless holiness was spent in the perfect accomplishment of the daily round.

Nor must we be led away into expecting that such faithfulness in trifles would carry with it any visible striking aureola of sanctity. The trial of the Pharisees' faith was that our blessed Lord's look was as one hidden and despised. Our Lady's unique sanctity, her exemption from the stain of the slightest venial sin, was also a hidden sanctity. By the age of ten we have seen what searching trials have already been doing their work in Theresa's soul, but externally she is in so many ways so perfectly natural, and one might say normally babyish, that it is possible that those who were nearest to her, may have had no suspicion of the great work

already in progress in her soul. So later, when in her sublime humility she speaks of herself as not being fitted for great holiness, of only being able to follow " a little way " of her own, suited to little childlike souls ; when we read of all the graciousness and charm that accompanied and disguised the completeness of her surrender of herself to God, we must be on our guard not to be misled by her humility and sweet spontaneous ways, and in estimating her sanctity we must carefully weigh the evidence of disclosures she often makes unconsciously as to the extraordinary nature of her apparently all but complete correspondence with the inspirations of grace. We must never dismiss from our thoughts the unconscious *obiter dictum* that dropped from her during her last days on earth that from the age of three, she had never consciously refused our Lord anything He had asked of her. Now at the age of ten she has been leading such a life of surrender for seven long years. Never did she relax until her " little barque came safely into port." Other saints, great saints, may have had their seasons of relaxation—they may have said with St. John the Apostle, as a pretty tradition has it—" that the bow cannot always remain bent." Not so with Theresa. Nothing is too trifling for her, nothing too small, she grinds fine, she never seems to relax her vigilance, but is ever on the watch, transmuting all the small opportunities of life into the finest gold, minting money as Father Faber so aptly puts it in " All for Jesus." Thus does she express her resolve : " I will let no tiny sacrifice pass, no look, no word. I wish to profit by the smallest actions and to do them for love." Here we have no ordinary character ; the soul shows its metal in little things just as in great ones—" La force qui n'est pas le bruit, pas le bavardage, pas le defi, mais *l'acte simple*, accompli pour réaliser un idéal "—" Force of character which does not consist in making a stir, nor in bluster nor defiance, but just in doing a thing, and doing it in order to realise an ideal."

It was during this period of comparative peace and freedom from trial, that our divine Lord came to the soul of His little spouse for the first time. Theresa made her First Communion in the Chapel of her school, the " Abbaye," the Benedictine Convent, on May 8th. (St. Michael's day) 1884, a year all but two days after the cure of her mysterious illness by our Lady's smile. She was confirmed five weeks later on June 14th. 1884. Three months were also spent by her as a boarder at the Benedictine

Convent, in preparation for her Communion, but the main preparation of her soul by our Lord had already been accomplished by the trials she had gone through. Her soul was like the little snowdrop that flowers in the midst of the storms and snows of winter. Her sisters provided her with pictures and books, and besides these, she was already beginning to receive the interior intellectual illuminations that were to enable her, guided by the light of faith, to walk in the way of perfection so surely and with so little danger of self-deception. Much must have gone before, to enable this baby of ten years of age to grasp such words as the following: "About this time I received what I looked upon as one of the greatest graces of my life, for at that age, I was not favoured with lights from on high as I am now. Our Lord made me understand that the only true glory is that which will last for ever; and that to attain it there is no necessity to do brilliant deeds, but rather, to hide from the eyes of others, and even from oneself, so that 'the left hand knows not what the right hand does.' (Math. vi. 3.) Pondering then the thought that I was born for glory, and seeking the means to attain it, it was made known to me interiorly that my glory would never be visible before the eyes of men, but that it would consist in becoming a Saint"—and she goes on to say later—"This aspiration may very well appear rash seeing how imperfect I was, and am still, after so many years spent in holy religion, *still all the same I ever feel the same daring confidence of becoming one day a great Saint.*" She also adds in her reminiscences of this period of her childhood—"At that time I did not think *it was necessary to suffer a great deal*, in order to attain sanctity; but God very soon disclosed this secret to me by means of the trials I have mentioned above."

Little Theresa was also taken away by her father for a holiday after her recovery. In the midst of friends and pleasant surroundings her bright nature realised all the attractiveness of life as led by good Catholics in easy circumstances, but already the little baby, as she seemed, was counting up how many years at the best such happiness could be expected to last for; she was wondering whether delightful homes and beautifully laid out grounds would be any great comfort at the hour of death, and there and then made her "great refusal." The memory of her own dear mother's death was still the beacon beckoning her onward, and young as she was, effectually saved her from illusions. "After

all," she muses later, " perhaps our Lord wished me to gain knowledge of the world before He paid His first visit to my soul ; so as to let me choose more surely the way which I was to promise Him to follow."

These illuminations, coming down from the Father of lights, were reinforced by the tender loving example and exhortations of her eldest sister and godmother, Marie. Nothing can be more touching and, to our insular minds, quaintly spontaneous, than the way in which the elder sisters of this saintly family with a wisdom and discretion beyond their years, taking up their mother's mantle, set about the training in perfection of their little sister.

In describing this delightful season of calm preparation Sister Theresa tells us—" Then too I had Marie, who took Pauline's place. Every evening I stayed a long time with her, listening eagerly to all she said. What touching things she told me ! I seem to feel that all that was noble and generous in her character was infused into my soul by her. As the warriors of old trained their children in the profession of arms, so she trained me for the battle of life, by rousing my ardour and by pointing to the victor's glorious palm. She spoke too of the imperishable riches which are so easy to amass each day, and of the pity of trampling them under foot when, as it were, one has but only to stoop and gather them. Oh, how eloquent my beloved sister was ! I would have given anything not to be the only one to listen to her earnest teaching, for in my simplicity I believed that if the greatest sinners only heard her, they would be converted, and that putting aside the perishable riches of this world, they would seek only the riches of heaven."

Marie, it seems at this period thought her little charge not yet suited for mental prayer and so, only let her say vocal prayers. The little one, in all ignorance, would often get away on holidays when she was not required, and finding a corner of the room would shut herself in with bedcurtains so as to indulge in the luxury of quiet thinking. One of the teachers at the Abbey felt curious when she heard of this novel way of spending a half holiday. " What do you think about ? " said the good Sister, laughingly. The reply surprised her, " I think about God, about the shortness of life and about eternity ; I just think." Without knowing it, as she recognised later, it was her divine Master Himself Who was instructing her in mental prayer.

Coming to her immediate preparation in this spirit, her stay at the Benedictine Convent was a period of very great joy, and Sister Theresa ever afterwards recurred with the greatest pleasure and gratitude to this time of quiet waiting. Her First Communion day, on May 8th. was a double feast, as the same day was also fixed for the end of her sister Pauline's noviciate and the taking of her vows.

As can be well understood, Sister Theresa, so full of detail about the more trifling incidents of her life, and their effect upon her, can find very little to say about her First Communion. She was writing, it was true, under obedience, and so had to describe as best she could, but in the writing she felt that words were but imperfect instruments to express deep feeling. She can only say it was recognition and union. From the dawn of thought her mind had been full of Him, and He had been making Himself known to her—so His sacramental coming had no strangeness for her—it was but a recognition—and the mystical union was such that she seemed to lose herself in it. "We were no longer two, Theresa had disappeared like a drop of water lost in the immensity of the ocean; Jesus alone remained. He was the Master and the King. Had not Theresa asked Him to take away her liberty which frightened her? She felt herself so weak and frail, that she wished for ever to be united to the divine strength." This joy of union became so intense and overpowering that the little one burst into tears. It was put down by her companions first to scruples of conscience, then to regret that she had neither her mother or favourite sister to be present and witness her making her First Communion. But they little knew; Theresa had gone through so much, that she was already beyond all that. In fact, knowing her dear mother was completely united to our Lord she felt that her own union with the same Lord and Master was the end of their separation. After her Communion she went home to a little family feast after first paying a visit to her newly-professed sister at the Carmel. Their happiness was perfect, she says, and nothing spoilt the perfection of the day nor troubled the peace of her soul. It is, however, a pathetic little face that looks out upon us from her photograph taken on the occasion, and underneath all the winsomeness of childhood we can detect the tracings of the heavy buffetings she has come through, and we must ever bear in mind that she was still

in the second sad period of her life that began on her mother's funeral day. "It was the most sorrowful period of my life, especially after Pauline, my second mother entered the Carmel; and it lasted from the time I was four years old until I was fourteen, when I recovered much of my childish buoyancy, while at the same time entering more fully into the serious side of life."

Theresa's Confirmation which took place about a month later, was also a day of chastened and spiritual joy. Even though she had only just completed a three months' retreat before her Communion, she once more went into retreat, and was rewarded, as all such preparations for God's graces are always rewarded, by a sensible feeling of God the Sanctifier, not as the mighty wind of Pentecost, but as the gentle breeze which the prophet Elias felt on Horeb, together with the special gift of fortitude in suffering —"a gift I needed sorely, for the martyrdom of my soul was soon to begin."

Theresa made her second Communion, kneeling at the rails between her father and her sister Marie on Ascension Day 1884. During her retreat before this second Communion, she fell a victim to the severe attack of scruples that persisted for two years. All her thoughts and actions were a source of trouble and anguish to her. She would gain temporary relief by going with her troubles to her sister Marie, but as soon as one difficulty was laid, another one sprung up in its place and the martyrdom began again.

Otherwise no notable development took place in the little one's mind after her First Communion. She went back to her school life with its tasks, its interests, and its friendships. As was only natural with her ardent affectionate character, she idealised two little school-friends of her own age. But in the case of one of them who had to leave school for a few months, she found this short absence was sufficient to make her indifferent to Theresa's advances on her return. Strangely enough too, possibly owing to the suffering she had gone through leaving its mark upon her character, or through an instinctive perception of her early sanctity, none of the nuns seem to have made a pet of Theresa. At the time she felt this, but later she recognised it as a mark of special protection, as with her affectionate temperament she felt she might very easily have fallen a victim to human affections and have been unable later to "fly away and be at rest." (Ps. liv. 7.) She still loved personal adornment, and at the

age of twelve and a half, during a holiday at Trouville with her aunt, she remembered later the pleasure she took in tying some pale blue ribbon in her hair, though once she had done so, it became the subject matter of a fresh scruple that was only laid by going to Confession. She also for a change, wished to secure some sympathy for her headaches which still recurred every day, so she tried to imitate the tactics of her little cousin who secured much sympathy whenever she had such an attack. Alas, for poor Theresa, such complaining not being in her line no one would believe her. Every one was convinced it was a fresh scruple of conscience that was tormenting her. She was chidden for her want of frankness and adjured to tell the truth and shame the devil—so poor little Theresa there and then gave up seeking for human sympathy any more than for human affection.

Her scruples, however, were so serious that her health was seriously injured and though a bright successful little student at school she had to be taken home when she was thirteen and given private lessons. A little later, in order to be enrolled amongst the Children of Mary she was able to go back to the Convent twice a week, but this was a strain. No one seems to have taken much interest in the sad, pensive, silent little one. All conversation, even on sacred subjects, wearied her, and when lessons were finished, she used to wait in the tribune of the chapel until her father came to fetch her home. Deep sadness was settling down on the little one's mind, and her sole comfort were the words her father had formerly quoted to her, "time is thy barque, and not thy dwelling place."

In this state of mind fresh partings came that threw her more than ever back upon herself. Her sister and counsellor Marie, "the only support of my soul," she calls her, followed Pauline and entered also into the Carmel of Lisieux. It was a severe blow and she shed many tears over it, but tears cost her little in those days, when her endurance was all but worn down by scruples and the effect of all the mental strain she had gone through since her babyhood. It was but one more blow, and she had already suffered so much that she was benumbed. She, however, made the practical resolution of taking no further pleasure in anything here below. In all these things it is easy to trace the finger of God leading her in spite of herself along the path of perfect detachment. These constant troubles also ended by making her abnor-

mally sensitive. She was always worrying, taking offence, giving offence, and fretting about it, and then fretting because she had worried. Marie's absence brought about a sort of crisis—her scruples still remained, but she had no one to tell them to—so in despair she made confidants of her two little brothers and the sisters who had gone to heaven in their baptismal innocence, begging them to take pity on and succour their poor suffering little sister. She talked to them with childish simplicity, telling them that as she was the youngest of the family she had always been loved and petted by all the others, and that they, if they had remained on earth would have given her the same marks of affection. All she asked of them, as she seemed bereft of almost all remaining earthly sympathy, was that they might obtain for her the grace of peace and in doing this prove they still loved her. It was evident she was losing her hold on earth and that she was approaching a crisis of some sort. As if to encourage her to turn her thoughts finally away from earth her appeal was heard: soon sweetest peace flooded her soul, and in the glow of her new-found tranquility her heart and mind began to turn solely to heavenly desires, and to hold communion continuously with the little brothers and sisters, already citizens of the heavenly kingdom, by her telling them of all the sorrows of her exile and of her wish to join them soon in their heavenly home.

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LISIEUX

NAVE OF SAINT-PIERRE WITH PULPIT

"It was not so easy to find a place near the pulpit for the sermon, but everyone was anxious to get a chair for the venerable patriarch leading his little daughter by the hand."

CHAPTER X

" IN EXITU."

One of the unforgettable passages of Dante's " Purgatorio " is that picturing the souls of men leaving this vale of tears on the angel's barque, singing as they leave the shores of the earth the song of the redeemed " In exitu." They have not yet reached the promised land, but they are done with earth, its deceptions, its snares and its haunting uncertainty. The way may be long and weary before they reach the goal, but the crisis of their fate is past ; they are safe. A crisis in the natural as well as in the supernatural order is seldom a sudden chance happening, but is nearly always the last link in a chain of orderly sequence. For some time previously, oftentimes for a whole lifetime, events have been leading up to that one decisive moment. Anyone who so far has followed carefully the life of little Theresa Martin can scarcely avoid feeling the conviction that as now her fourteenth year was approaching, the extraordinary trials she had gone through together with their reaction on such an exceptionally gifted mind, clearly pointed to some decisive happening being close at hand.

As a result of the shock of bereavement, intensified by her rare power of sympathy with those who suffered along with her, the heaviest of crosses was laid upon her little shoulders from the very dawn of reason. Then one by one, the props to which she wished to cling in the natural order were struck away ; her already impaired powers of resistance then failed, and nervous breakdown with melancholy and scruples as its manifestation ravaged her poor little soul, so that at the end she was left stranded and friendless.

Humanly speaking the diagnosis might well have been that she was a wreck. It was true there might have been some natural residue of reserve energy to enable her yet to emerge from the trial unscathed, with mind and will unimpaired ; but the chances of the little barque weathering the storm were distinctly unfavourable. A sudden failure of energy, with death as the result, was not

at this age by any means an unlikely sequel after all she had gone through ; or, as is the case with many who have been tried beyond the limits of human endurance, the living death of some mental affliction would have been no surprise. These predictions would, however, take no account of divine grace which all the while was not only utilising the environment but at the same time was strengthening and tempering the instrument it was shaping.

As is often the case, the inevitable crisis seemed to come as the result of an apparently unpremeditated trifle. It was Christmas Eve 1886, and little Theresa who was not yet fourteen years of age had been with her father and sisters to midnight Mass. She was still the baby of the family, and after all she had endured, it throws a light on what was all through life the engaging freshness of her childlike soul, to learn that as she came home holding the hands of her loved ones, she prattled with childish delight about all the presents she expected to find in the shoes she had never yet failed to put out on Christmas Eve.

She was the last remaining link with the happy home life of the days gone by, when a whole houseful of joyous laughter-loving children made glad festival at Christmastide. Possibly, it was this feeling of contrast that, working on good M. Martin's overwrought nerves, drew from him the sharp exclamation——" Really all this is too babyish for a big girl like Thérèse, and I hope it is the last year it will happen." All present trembled for the result on the poor motherless little girl, who of late had given way to tears even if anyone looked at her, and whose exaggerated sensitiveness had made her life a misery to herself and to those about her. Her sister Celine, ever her faithful champion crept to her side as they went upstairs and whispered—" Don't come down yet, wait a bit ; you would burst out crying and grieve Papa." But no—there was no longer any need for anxiety. She is " no longer the same Thérèse " ; her childhood is gone from her for ever—in a moment in the twinkling of an eye, the change that was so long preparing is now accomplished. We shall let Theresa tell us herself of the effects of this decisive grace, that no doubt is typical of the call of many of God's saints, bridging over the gap between the life of the ordinary good or saintly Christian, and that other existence of perfect union with God which the Church calls heroic sanctity. As a rule the successive stages of the development of the soul in the supernatural order

remain ever a secret between the saint and God alone, and it has often been said how instructive it would be were we given an insight into the successive stages of struggle, as well as a description of the graces, in virtue of which the once imperfect soul formerly wavering between earthly attractions and the undivided service of God, at length drawn powerfully by grace, once for all abandons itself utterly to God. Then as the result of such a surrender it experiences even here upon earth the joy of union, the torrent of delights of the house of God.

Here, then, is the story of " the conversion," as she herself called it, of a child of thirteen. Both the failings of childhood and its harmless pleasures were to come to an end : our Lord had Himself appointed the hour. " Theresa was no longer the same. Jesus had changed her heart. Keeping back my tears, I came down quickly into the dining-room, and, mastering my heart, which was beating wildly, I took up my shoes, and laying them before Papa, drew out triumphantly all the presents, looking all the while as happy as a queen. Father smiled ; his face showed no trace of annoyance and Celine looked on as in a dream. Happily it was a glad reality. Little Theresa had at last regained for good the strength of mind which she had lost ever since she was four and a half years old." . . . . . " With this happy night began then the third period of my life, far more beautiful, and far more enriched with God's grace than any other. Jesus satisfied with my good will, accomplished in a single moment what I had not been able to do for several years. I could say with the Apostles, ' Lord we have toiled all night and have taken nothing.' Still more compassionate for me than for His disciples, Jesus Himself took the net and drew it out full of fishes ; so I was made a fisher of souls. Love entered into my heart, bringing with it the need of absolute forgetfulness of self, and since then I have been happy."

Here we have a most wonderful description of the mysterious operation by which the soul is lifted up and set upon an entirely new plane of the service of God. It may be well to make clear in what this consists by pointing out in detail the entirely different way in which the soul looks at everything in its new state. This may seem an unnatural state, but it may help us to understand, if we imagine as I hinted at the beginning of this chapter, that the soul has actually left this earth and begun its purgatory. First

the earth seems very far off and unreal—next the things the heart was set on, and for whose loss it grieved, seem all of a sudden as of little worth. Thus Theresa, so we learn from her, has entirely got over the shock of her mother's death—she views it entirely from the supernatural standpoint; she no longer grieves over her loneliness in the loss of her two elder sisters; the sadness she suffered in consequence of those trials is now a thing of the past—she is no longer scrupulous, her purgative stage is over—she is not self-conscious—she no longer is worried about the opinions of others or the impression she produces on them—she no longer seeks or even wishes for the affection of others; earthly happiness, honours, comforts, no longer appeal to her—she seeks only one thing and that the will of God and the promotion of His interests.

This astounding gift, the free gift of God not merited, was however as we have seen proceeded by the sorest trials. It is terrible to think of the early trials and sufferings endured by Theresa from her very cradle—trials so bitter, keen and searching that in the natural order might well have all but destroyed her mental balance, but for her having been predestined to a life of close union with God. Therefore had her soul been fortified so that she might endure them without detriment, and yet be shaped by them into the raw material of sanctity.

It must not be imagined that the transformation of character we have described was merely a passing emotional phase. It was literally the beginning of a new mental life—the restarting of life on a new plane, with no reverting to the former state. She has, as it were, grown a new mind, and this new mind has but one idea—the interests of Jesus. It is strange and startling to read of thoughts as these passing through the mind of a little schoolgirl just turned fourteen: "One Sunday, on closing my prayer book at the end of Mass a photograph representing our Lord on the cross partly slipped out from between the pages, just showing one of His divine Hands, pierced and bleeding. On the spot I experienced a new and indescribable emotion. I was cut to the very heart to see that Precious Blood falling to earth, without anyone troubling to gather it up. I resolved to remain ever in spirit at the foot of the cross so as to be ever at hand to receive from Him the divine dew of salvation and forthwith to shed it abroad on the souls of men. From that day forth the cry of Jesus in His death agony, 'I thirst' was ever sounding in my

heart, and ended by enkindling in it a hitherto unknown and lively fervour. I would fain have given my Beloved to drink; I, too, was consumed with thirst for souls—and I wished at any cost to snatch sinners from the eternal flames."

She began by praying night and day for an impenitent criminal who was sentenced to death, asking that even if he refused the Sacraments he might be given grace at the last moment, asking for a sign—and the sign she asked was given to the very letter. As the wretched man was being dragged to the plank, at the very last, almost by an afterthought he turned to the crucifix the priest held up to him, and kissed three times the sacred Wounds.

" I had now got the sign I asked for," she goes on, " and this sign was most consoling to me. Was it not at the sight of these very wounds of Jesus, and at seeing His Precious Blood flow, that the thirst for souls entered my heart? I had wished to give them this innocent Blood to drink so as to wash them from their stains, and so the lips of my first-born sought out these divine Wounds! Ever since my craving to save souls has grown day by day, and I seem to feel Jesus whispering to me as to the Samaritan woman: 'Give me to drink.' It was an interchange of love. Upon sinners I poured the blood of Jesus; and to Jesus I offered these same souls, watered by the dew of Calvary; thus I hoped to quench His thirst. But the more I gave Him to drink, the more the thirst in my own poor little soul increased—and I looked upon this burning thirst as the most exquisite reward I could receive."

" Thus, in a short space of time, had our Lord withdrawn me from the narrowness of my former life, and the first great step had been taken. But I had still a long way to go. My mind, now freed from scrupulosity and less morbidly sensitive, developed accordingly." Reading about the joys of heaven still further inflamed her mind with bliss that was not earthly: " I felt beforehand what God had in store for those who love Him; and seeing how these rewards are so out of all proportion to the trifling sacrifices of this life, my wish was to love Jesus with a passionate love and to testify my love by showing him marks of affection in every possible way so long as I was able."

Celine, her companion and favourite sister, though older than Theresa by three years, now sat at her feet as a disciple, and caught

from her little sister the fervour of divine love. Together they followed Jesus with joyous steps—their conversations in the evenings as they sat up in the *belvidere* of their home looking out on the pleasant Norman country and up at the stars, were exceedingly sweet, and signal graces were showered down upon them. God still, she said, appeared to them not in great light, but merely in signs and figures, but the veil was so thin, doubt was impossible ; there was no longer need of faith or hope in those days of their first fervour, " for love " she explains " even here, gave us Him we sought. We had found Him alone, and He had given us His kiss that none in future might despise us. These divine favours were not destined to remain without fruit ; the practice of virtue became easy and natural to me. At the outset, it is true, some signs of a conflict appeared outwardly, but, bit by bit, going against myself, seemed to come more easily to me, until it became second nature to me as soon even as the opportunity arose."

Having a broad-minded confessor, she was encouraged to go frequently to Communion, though he knew little of her stupendous graces, averse as she was to revealing what she felt in her soul. She seems to have been led by our Lord Himself. Quoting the words of St. John of the Cross, she applies them to her experiences at the beginning of her life of union. " I had no guide and no light but that which shone within my heart ; but it was guiding me more surely than the light of noon-day to where He was awaiting me who knows my inmost soul."

The promptings of this interior light soon took the definite form of a vocation to the Carmelite Order early in Theresa's fourteenth year. Even in such a pious *milieu* the broaching of a desire by a mere child to become a nun in a strictly enclosed Order evidently caused surprise. It was no doubt at first attributed to a desire to enjoy once more the society of her elder sisters whose loss had unquestionably affected her deeply.

All unaware of the extraordinary spiritual development that had recently taken place, her friends were quite wrong, Flesh and blood no longer drew her now—the call was that of her Beloved, and she explains that the divine call had now become so powerful that she would have rushed through fire to follow it and find Jesus. Her family even was divided on the subject. Her eldest sister Marie thought her too young. Pauline alone at first encou-

raged her, and later Celine, when she was able to summon up courage to take her into her confidence. Next on Whit Sunday 1887, she ventured to break the news to her already ailing father who was just recovering from a first slight stroke of paralysis. Coming on top of all his sorrows recent losses, and failing health, the prospect of the loss of his " little queen " was a sad blow for him, but he accepted it at once and showed the truly supernatural character of his goodness by at once willingly offering back to our Lord the treasure that had been entrusted to his keeping. Her uncle, M. Guérin, however, took a different view and used his influence with her father to at least delay the realisation of her wish. Simultaneously with this contradiction in the natural order came the first of those mysterious trials that seem inseparable from the higher paths of sanctity. This was an attack lasting for three days, of apparently causeless sorrow joined with a feeling of complete dereliction which she compares to the sorrow experienced by our Blessed Lady and St. Joseph in the three days loss. " The sadness of Gethsemane had entered my soul," she explains, " I was alone without comfort either from earth or heaven." As soon as this cloud had lifted as mysteriously as it had come, she was surprised to learn from her uncle that he withdrew all opposition to her following her vocation even at her early age.

The history of the next twelve months now resolves itself into a series of struggles to overcome one after another the various obstacles that true wisdom and experience placed in the way of a child of fourteen or fifteen definitely choosing the life of such a severe Order as that of the Carmel before she could be supposed to know her own mind, much less in any way adequately to realise all that she was giving up.

These further bars to her attaining her goal were the objections of the Mother Prioress herself, and next the refusal of the ecclesiastical superior of the Convent, the Bishop's delegate, to allow her to be admitted. Then followed an appeal to the Bishop himself, who consulted with his Vicar General, and finally the little one, finding the Bishop hesitated about giving her permission, must have amused him by her ignorance of canonical procedure, in getting her father to inform him, that as she was joining in the approaching pilgrimage to Rome, she hoped by mentioning the matter to the Holy Father himself to obtain there and then an authoritative permission. The Bishop's heart was evidently won

by this most delightful *naiveté* on the part of the charming and saintly father and his angelic child, especially when it came out that she had specially put up her hair that very morning for the first time in order to impress him with an idea of her staidness and maturity. To the surprise of his Vicar General the austere Bishop caressed the little one fondly, tried to get her to dry her tears, and encouraged her with the hope of his reconsidering his decision even before she left with the pilgrimage ; but it would seem in the hurry of preparation (for the Bishop himself was also going to Rome with his flock), his promise was forgotten. It was, no doubt, ordained that she should appeal to Caesar and that there should be handed down to all time the charming picture of the meeting of the Vicar of Christ and the little Theresa ; of the encounter between youth and age, of the ripest worldly wisdom with the dovelike innocence of the soul that was ever to be that of a little child.

But even while consumed with the desire to become our Lord's spouse, Theresa was bending all her natural energies to attaining her object, the operations of grace were still pursuing their normal course in her soul. This is especially worthy of note, as showing that Theresa was led by our Lord upon the beaten path of sanctity and as disposing too of the opinion that human motives are sufficient to explain almost everything that seems extraordinary in her life.

We have already noticed how the natural human motives and affections with which she started life in common with the rest of the human race, were soon mortified as a consequence of the trials she went through. Then, when the natural self had all but died a natural death, the new life of union with God was infused into what was still a child's soul. The strange thing was that her manners and ways betrayed no sign of the momentous change that had taken place. She was still apparently the quite good pious child, and warned by her previous unhappiness at disclosing what she felt was a vision of our Lady, she was now most careful not to give the slightest sign of the startling operations taking place in her soul. She herself assures us of this, saying : " To all outward appearances my life was still the same ; I kept up my studies, and above all I grew in God's love. At times I experienced thrills of love for God—in fact undoubted raptures. One evening, feeling at a loss to tell Jesus how much I loved Him

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LISIEUX

L'ABBAYE (BENEDICTINE CONVENT)

"I was eight and a half years old when I first went to school at the Benedictine Abbey at Lisieux."

and how keenly I desired He should be everywhere served and glorified, I was heartbroken at the thought that never a single act of love would ever reach Him from the deep pit of hell. At this I cried out that with all my heart, I would readily consent to be cast down for ever into that place of torment and revolt, if by doing so I could turn the hatred of the lost into love. Of course, that would not have glorified Him, for His only wish is for us to be happy, but love often makes one feel inclined to say foolish things without number. Speaking in this way did not mean that I desired heaven any less, but in those days heaven for me was nothing but love, and I felt nothing could tear me apart from His love."

Mind, these are the words of a girl just turned fourteen, who a few months before was fretting over trifles, or the loss of the presence of an elder sister, and that this astounding change came suddenly in the twinkling of an eye. This is why she always compared this change to that which took place in the case of St. Paul, and so ever kept Christmas Day 1886, as the date of her conversion.

It was in this spirit she strove unceasingly to enter the Convent and be united to our blessed Lord as His spouse. During these few months she began her active apostolate, carrying on the family tradition of her beloved sisters Pauline and Marie by instructing and training in holiness two little girls of a poor neighbour who was ill, and in doing so not only gained an insight into some active work, but also realised the need of prayer so that those who undertake such works may be rightly guided to train the fresh minds of children on true supernatural lines. She insists on the lesson of equality of opportunity in the spiritual order saying that all and every human soul is capable of high sanctity if it is started on supernatural lines and instancing the case of a linnet, a pet of her own, who by constantly listening to a canary, at last after many faltering attempts to imitate it, succeeded so perfectly that its song was indistinguishable from that of the canary.

Thus was her time spent while preparing for her pilgrimage to Rome, which was to provide her with most of the first-hand knowledge of the world she was about to leave, as well as bring her face to face with the great Pontiff whose blessing was to start her on her religious life as well as seal it on its close.

CHAPTER XI

THE PILGRIMAGE TO ROME.

In her autobiography Theresa has much to say of her one pilgrimage abroad, and her historic interview with Leo XIII. All she saw was vividly photographed on her mind, and few who saw or were interested in the delightfully fresh and simple little girl who wanted to become a nun so young, had any idea of how she was weighing them up with quite preternatural wisdom in the balance of the Sanctuary. Everyone she met she regarded with the keen appraising eye of divine faith—she watched their every word, their gestures, their expressions at a time when a man is least able to keep up disguise—when travelling. All came under her review, large modern cities with their wreckage of humanity, the great folks of this earth with their titles, priests, bishops, and religious—she looked at all with the seeing eye, was all the more resolved on the superiority of her chosen vocation, and grasped the inwardness of the role of the contemplative Orders in the church, viz., to pray not only for sinners, but for priests and the rulers of the church.

Besides this she was able to garner up without dropping a single one from her remembrance, sunny memories of the smiling aspects of life in southern lands with their high mountains, bright skies and sunlit seas, all of which would come back later at will to cheer with their radiance the little cell in the Carmel at Lisieux, that looked out only on a line of grey roofs.

More precious still were memories of the piercing hazel eyes of Christ's Vicar looking down into the depths of her childlike soul, and of the shrines of Italy, with the actual bodies of God's saints sleeping peacefully awaiting the day of their resurrection. What made all doubly sweet was the company of Celine, her confidant, whose soul was attuned to her own, and with whom she was able to talk over all she saw and plan all their daring feats. Thus they both climbed to the very top of the highest spire of the Duomo of Milan—they both saw and venerated St. Anthony's relics in Padua, and in Bologna knelt at the feet of the incorrupt body of

St. Catherine of Bologna, still seated in her chair as Abbess in the quiet little side chapel on the Gospel side of the Church of the "Corpus Domini."

Next came Loreto and its basilica. The little one already notices that the French custom of reserving the Blessed Sacrament promiscuously at all the altars of a large church is not the rule in Rome or Italy; and so with Celine is heartbroken to think they will not be able to receive Communion within the "Santa Casa," but they soon learn Italian ways and promptly waylay a priest about to say Mass at the altar inside the Holy House itself, who was only too pleased to give the two little French girls Communion at his Mass. I am afraid too, as she darkly hints, all unconscious of the fearsome censures attached to the deed, they endeavoured to carry away some of the interior of the Holy House as a relic of the occasion. At the Colosseum too, they gave their party and guides the slip and, like the present writer, were not content until they got down to *terra firma* on the actual floor of the amphitheatre, carrying back some stones as a memorial. In the Catacombs a new association will ever attach to the former tomb of St. Cecilia, as both Theresa and Celine lay down within it and here, as at St. Agnes Outside the Walls, finding herself, as it were, in the company of those early saints, she recognised her kinship to them and ever afterwards they became her great patrons and the constant objects of her devotion. At St. Agnes, Outside the Walls, where she was very keen to get some sort of relic for her "little mother," Sister Agnes of Jesus, what seems almost more than a coincidence occurred. There seemed no way of obtaining her desire. She turned away from the Confession baffled, and gazed up at the gorgeous mosaics in the semi-dome, representing St. Agnes in the robes of a Roman Empress. At that very moment there fell at the feet of Theresa from this exceedingly ancient mosaic, a small particle of red marble, which she eagerly picked up and brought back to Lisieux; and finally at Santa Croce, the Trappist monk, won by her entreaties, let her put her finger through the reliquary and touch one of the nails. Then came her presence at the Pope's private Mass, along with the rest of the pilgrims. After the Mass of thanksgiving, the indefatigable Pontiff, as was usual, gave audience to them all. It was then she brought off the culminating coup of her pilgrimage, and in spite of all the warnings about not addressing the Pope, in view of the

great strain such audiences always must have entailed on him, little Theresa, aided and abetted by the faithful Celine nothing daunted, in kissing the Pontiff's hand, made her petition to be allowed to enter the Carmel as soon as she was fifteen—not forgetting to add, diplomatically—" in honour of your jubilee." The Vicar General of Bayeux in alarm rushed forward to explain—the matter was being considered by the Superiors, etc, whereupon the Holy Father diplomatically echoed—" Then, little one, you will do as the superiors decide." But this was not what Theresa wanted ; was he not the Vicar of Christ, and was not his word law ? So she clasped her hands on his knees to insist further, " Holy Father," she pleaded, " if you said ' Yes,' everything would be settled "—Whereupon the greatest diplomat of the age replied—" Well, well, you shall enter, if it be God's will."

So far there is nothing extraordinary in the interview, except the ardour of the little suppliant who would not be denied until the Noble Guard interfered to beg her to desist. It was all so hurried and unexpected and the Holy Father was not one to be taken off his guard—but after blessing the little one tenderly, he seems at last to have realised the unique character of the soul into which his clear penetrating eyes had gazed, and as Theresa passed out of the chapel into the ante-camera, the holy old man's look lingered long upon her retreating form.

Theresa tells us Rome had little attraction for her after the failure of her quest. She went to Naples and back, finding much to give food for thought as to the fleeting nature of earthly pleasures as she trod the streets of pagan Pompeii. On their way home it is pleasant to think that the two sisters saw Assisi with all its touching recollections. It brings home to us how such places of pilgrimage are sanctified, and owe their aroma to the generations of saints who have knelt at the same spots as we ourselves do to-day. At Florence they visited the shrine of the Carmelite, St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi, and here little Theresa was again the favoured one, as her hand being the only one small enough to pass through the grating she was able to touch the shrine with the rosaries of all the party. They were soon on their way home past Pisa and Genoa, and along the Italian Riviera. Theresa was now anxious to be back again ; her father suggested a fresh pilgrimage to Jerusalem, but the little one sighed for a better land and only wished to " become a prisoner in Carmel and that soon."

She soon got over the want of success of her appeal to the Holy Father for a special permission to enter the convent, and was cheered by the remembrance of her own good Bishop's promise to deal with the application himself. At the suggestion of Mother Mary Gonzaga, the then Prioress of the Carmel of Lisieux, she wrote at once to the Bishop begging him not to forget his promise made to her before she left for Rome. All things considered, we cannot help feeling the Bishop was exceedingly kind and prompt in giving such a very serious decision, involving the whole future of one who was still only a child in years. The delay seemed intolerable to the naturally ardent impetuous nature of little Theresa, but so far from causing her to be impatient, the trial in the light of her new outlook on life was only the means of leading her to practise detachment more perfectly, even as regards spiritual things.

As she puts it herself—" this was indeed a sore trial, but our Lord whose heart is always watching taught me that He grants miracles to those whose faith is small as a grain of mustard seed, in the hope of strengthening this slender faith ; whilst for His intimate friends, for His Mother, He did not work miracles till He had proved their faith. Did He not permit Lazarus to die, even though Martha and Mary had sent word he was sick ? And at the marriage feast of Cana, when our Lady asked her Divine Son to aid the master of the house, did He not answer that His hour had not yet come ? But after the trial what a reward ! Water is changed into wine, and Lazarus rises from the dead. In this way did my Beloved act with His little Theresa ; after He had tried her for a long time He granted all her desires."

We also get an insight into her mind from the first of her published letters which was written at this same period to Mother Agnes of Jesus, her sister Pauline. " My darling little Mother—You are right when you tell me every cup must contain its drop of gall. I find that trials are a great help towards detachment from the things of the earth ; they make one look higher than this world. Nothing here can satisfy, and we can only find rest so far as we hold ourselves ready to do God's will. My frail barque has great difficulty in reaching port. I sighted it long since, and all the while I find myself drifting away. Yet, Jesus steers this little barque and I am sure that on the day chosen by Him it will come safely to the blessed shore of Carmel. O Pauline, when

Jesus shall have vouchsafed me this grace, I wish to give myself entirely to Him, to suffer always for Him, to live for Him alone. I do not fear His rod, for even when suffering is heaviest, we feel it is His sweet hand which strikes. I remember, too that for every suffering we go through cheerfully here, we shall love God the more through all eternity. Happy should I be if at the hour of my death I could have a single soul to offer to Jesus. There would be one soul the less in hell and one more to bless God in heaven for all eternity." Lisieux, December, 1887.

The writer of the above letter we must remember, is not yet fifteen years old. Her patience also was instrumental in obtaining her the grace to sanctify in a special way this time of waiting. "How did these three months pass?" she continues: "They were fruitful in suffering and still more in graces of all kinds. At first the thought came into my mind not to bother about spiritual things and that I might lead a less strict life than was my custom. But God gave me to understand the benefit I might derive from this time left at my free disposal, and I then resolved to give myself up more than ever to a serious and mortified life. When I say mortified I do not mean to speak of penances like those of the saints; far from resembling those beautiful souls who from their very childhood practised all sorts of austerities, I made mine consist simply in breaking in my will, keeping back an impatient answer, doing some little service to those around me without setting store thereby, and numberless other things of this kind. By practising these trifles I prepared myself to become the spouse of Jesus, and I can never tell you, Mother, how much the added delay helped me to grow in abandonment, in humility and in other virtues."

CHAPTER XII

IN THE HAVEN

Although she knew it not, the long wished for permission of the Bishop of Bayeux allowing Theresa to enter the Carmel was forwarded to the Convent before the end of the year. The Mother Prioress, however, said nothing about it at the time : it was not until New Year's Day she told Theresa, and then only to inform her that she thought it would be best for her not to enter until after Lent was over. Once more then Theresa had to learn the hard lesson of detachment in regard even to spiritual blessings. So far from the delay being the occasion of repining, it was as the Mother Prioress foresaw, a new opportunity for sanctification. Theresa at first was again tempted to allow herself a period of relaxation during this additional delay, but she overcame this snare also, and, enlightened by a special grace, realised the great benefits that would flow from a strict, mortified, well-ordered life during these last few weeks. In her humility she deprecates her countless little ways of manifesting her love of God, and makes little of her habitual checking of any movements of impatience, her loving ways of being always on the alert to render small services to those around her " without setting store thereby, and a hundred other things of the kind."

At last the day of parting came. Sunday April 8th. 1888, was the last day she spent in her bright, peaceful home, " Les Buissonnets." When the time of separation came she felt the wrench of parting none the less in spite of all the ardour with which she had followed up her vocation. In His enumeration of the things which it costs so much to give up for His sake, our Lord significantly lays stress on pleasant and spacious surroundings as being not the least of the sacrifices His followers will make for His sake. Theresa knew full well that humanly speaking she will never again tread the garden paths of the little paradise of her childhood, never again will her eyes be gladdened by the sight of the well-remembered harmonious lines of her home. She realises her father and two sisters will still stay on, but for them its bright-

ness will have departed with the loss of her who had been the sunshine of the home. But she faltered not. In the evening, she says, " we were gathered round the table where I was to take my place for the last time. How heartrending these farewells are, and then just when I would have liked to see myself forgotten I received the tenderest expressions of affection from all, as if to increase the pain of parting."

" The next morning, after having had a last look at 'Les Buissonnets,' the beautiful home of my childhood, I set out for the Carmel. I heard Mass, surrounded like the evening before by all my beloved relatives. At the moment of Communion, when Jesus had entered into their hearts, I heard nothing but sobs on all sides. For my part I shed no tears, but as I led the way to the cloister door, my heart beat so violently that I wondered if I were going to die. Oh, the agony of that moment ! One must have experienced it in order to understand."

" I embraced all the dear ones and knelt down for my father's blessing. He too knelt down and blessed me through his tears. It was a sight to gladden the angels, this old man giving his child to God while she was yet in the springtime of life. At length the doors of the Carmel closed upon me . . . I fell into your arms, dear Mother, and received the embraces of another family, whose devotedness and affection is not dreamt of by the outside world."

"At last my desires were realised, and I cannot describe the deep, sweet peace which filled my soul. This peace has remained with me during the eight and a half years of my life here, and has never left me, even amid the greatest trials."

" Everything in the Convent delighted me ; I fancied myself transported to the desert ; our little cell above all appealed to me. Nevertheless, I repeat that my happiness was calm and peaceful—not even the lightest breeze ruffled the tranquil waters on which my little barque sailed ; no cloud darkened the blue sky. I felt fully recompensed for all I had gone through, and I kept saying : ' Now I am here for ever.' "

" This was no passing joy ; it did not pass away like first illusions. From illusions God in His mercy has ever preserved me. I found the religious life just what I imagined it would be, and sacrifice was never a matter of surprise ; and yet for all that you know well that from the beginning my steps encountered more thorns rather than roses."

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LISIEUX

PLAYGROUND AT BENEDICTINE ABBEY

"We had a holiday every Thursday . . . but I was not much of a hand at playing games like the other children . . . but I did my best with indifferent success."

It was in these dispositions Theresa entered what was to prove her last home on this earth—where she was to live the nine remaining years of her life.

From now onwards it will be a matter of some difficulty to follow the developments of her mind in response to the graces that were given her. In finishing her course she literally *ran* in the service of God. Even at this early stage of her mental and spiritual development she is so advanced that she takes most of us out of our depth. It is merely a progressive continuation of the mental processes of her childhood. As almost a baby she had the intuitive knowledge and powers of reflection of a child twice her age. Now, though apparently but a winsome, gentle child of fifteen, she almost has the matured experience of a woman of over thirty. Once in holy religion the grace of God more than ever before enlarges her heart, and she speeds straight to the goal.

Such rare gifts will much enhance the difficulties of our task in tracing the course of this development, not only in that such experiences are rare, but also that they are so mysterious that words are inadequate to express what really takes place in the soul.

As far as incidents go, the biography of Theresa might be said to have come to an end with her entry into the Carmel of Lisieux. From now onwards until death claimed her in her 25th. year, her external life is merely a record of the daily observance of an exemplary religious. Of incident there is scarcely anything to record, and it gives rise to very deep reflections to realise that the intense holiness of a life that seems to have so great import for the Church in these latter days was quite unsuspected even by fervent Catholics then living in Lisieux in whose midst these wonders were taking place. It reminds us of Jerusalem, all unconscious on the Passover night of the momentous mysteries of the first Mass in the upper chamber of Mount Sion ; an event of the very first magnitude in even the external history of the world, and one fraught with the most momentous consequences for the city itself.

It may be questioned, too, whether the holy and gifted Mother Prioress and the Community realised on the 9th. of April 1888, that they were receiving as their postulant anything but an exceedingly pious and excellent child. Appearances certainly gave them no clue to the mysterious operations of grace. Little Theresa

was, to all appearances, a typically simple, earnest, winsome child, who had suffered much from delicate health, and had been overwrought, nervous and scrupulous. During the previous year it was a matter of general knowledge that on growing up she had picked up wonderfully and had become more strong-minded, sensible, matter-of-fact, and, above all, cheerful. Her manner was simple and childlike, and in many unexpected ways she still retained the engaging freshness of an unspoilt child.

Besides this, to the eyes of a thoroughly trained religious, Theresa had much to learn and much to correct. The training of a noviciate is two-fold : first comes the religious formation of character, but besides this there must necessarily be a formal training in outward customs and observances and the practical carrying out of many necessary household duties. Most of this was entirely a new experience for Theresa who had scarcely finished her school days, and had little experience of the methodical performance of many needful tasks. The time, therefore, of her postulancy and noviciate was none too long to enable her to acquire the ways of a trained religious and in some ways to the eyes of her superiors she must have seemed quite as *gauche* and imperfect as the average fresh arrival.

In this way her youthfulness and inexperience and consequent slowness in learning to use her hands, were the means of trying the patience of those who set themselves to train her, and brought down upon her many a reproof. This was providential as it preserved her humility, and as she says, saved her from any danger there might have been of her becoming " the spoilt darling of the Convent."

All the same the Prioress, Mother Mary Gonzaga, was a woman of rare character and judgment, and no doubt after but a short experience had more than a suspicion of the treasure committed to her care. Besides this she had the support and counsel of the Foundress of the Carmel of Lisieux, Mother Geneviève of St. Theresa, who was still alive, a woman of exceptional sanctity and discernment. How thoroughly the Mother Prioress took in hand the training of her little postulant may be gathered from the fact that even Theresa herself in the last year of her life could not refrain from insinuating how she felt it at the time. " Then, too, my respected Mother, our Lord allowed that quite unconsciously, on your part I should be treated by you very severely. I could

never meet you without being found fault with. I remember once I had left a cobweb in the cloister, and you said to me before the whole Community: 'It is easy to see our cloisters are swept by a child of fifteen. It is dreadful! Go and sweep away that cobweb and be more careful in future.'"

"On the rare occasions when I spent an hour with you for spiritual direction, it seemed to me I was being scolded nearly all the time, and what pained me most of all was that I did not see how to correct my faults: for instance my slow ways and want of thoroughness in my duties, faults which you were careful to point out to me, in your anxiety and goodness to me."

"During the time I was a postulant our Mistress used to send me every afternoon at half-past four to weed the garden. This was a real penance, the more so, dear Mother, because I was almost sure to meet you on the way. On one such occasion you remarked: 'Really, this child does absolutely nothing. What on earth is to be done with a novice who must be sent out for a walk every day?' And it was in this way you invariably dealt with me."

"And yet, dear Mother, how can I thank you for giving me so sound and valuable a training? It was an inestimable grace. What should I have become, if, as the world outside believed, I had been but the pet of the community? Perhaps instead of seeing our Lord in the person of my superiors, I should only have considered the creature, and my heart which had been so carefully guarded in the world, would have fallen a victim to human affection in the cloister. Happily your motherly prudence saved me from such a misfortune."

This was no fancied danger in Theresa's case. From her earliest years we notice that if there was any failing she was subject to in the natural order more than another, it was that of first idealising her friends and then casting herself down before the idol she had set up. Naturally, a finished gifted religious like the Mother Prioress, appealed to both the romantic and religious elements in Theresa's character and later on she confessed: "I remember that when a postulant, I was at times so violently tempted to seek my own satisfaction in the joy of your sweet presence, that I had to rush quickly past your cell door and grasp the banisters firmly to keep myself from turning back. I wanted to ask for endless permissions; numberless pretexts to yield to my desires came into my mind. I am happy now because from

the very outset I did not yield. I have now the reward promised to them that battle courageously. There is now no more danger, for my heart is strengthened in God and consolations can do it no harm. I have loved Him alone, and am enabled thereby to love those dear to Him far more intensely than if I had selfishly given a barren affection to others besides Him."

She was preserved from this danger by the wise attitude of her Superior, a danger from which even Saints on the testimony of St. Francis de Sales seem by no means free.

The decisive factor, however, in her training, which becomes all the more noticeable now that she is a religious with superiors and directors charged with the guidance of her soul, is that our Lord Himself seems to have still continued to lead her on just as He had done in her own home.

When Theresa first entered the Carmel, Père Pichon a Jesuit Father of much learning and discretion was the confessor—but he was soon removed and sent to Canada, and no one seems to have adequately taken his place. Before leaving, the good priest, no doubt with some insight into the unique state of Theresa's soul, used the memorable words—" May our Lord always be your Superior and Novice Master." And she goes on to comment on this, adding—" And indeed He ever was and likewise my Director."

In some mysterious way, too, Theresa, in spite of her genuine affection and veneration for her Novice Mistress, could not bring herself to open her heart to her. It was not that she repelled Theresa—but some mysterious barrier seemed to dam up the outflow of Theresa's confidences. " Her kindness was beyond words, I loved and esteemed her, and yet my soul did not expand. I found myself unable to describe all that went on in my soul, that is, I could not put it into words, and so the time of direction became a veritable martyrdom, not to say a torture." What is quite possible is that a recital of her mental processes would have seemed almost incredible in a child of fifteen or sixteen. Later on there was no concealing the fact of her sanctity, which became more evident day by day, especially in the extraordinary maturity of her direction of the novices, who eventually were committed to her care, and so under obedience self-revelation became easy. But much had to happen, and she was to suffer sorely before self-revelation became a matter of indifference.

Most of the narrative of her religious life will be found to

consist of the stages of training by suffering, carried on by our Lord Himself, that was to perfect her holiness and apparently do the work of purgatory here on earth.

This suffering was of two kinds, first external happenings, and secondly, excruciating mental processes of purification. At the beginning a heavy cross was laid upon her shoulders by the most distressing illness of her beloved father. He recovered from a second stroke of paralysis just in time to allow him to be present at Theresa's clothing on January 10th. 1889, but on February 12th. following he had another attack and later his mind was clouded for the last three years of his life.

It would be hard to imagine a more distressing trial for the exquisitely balanced mind of Theresa. Alas, she had soon seen the end of all things in her short life : her mother snatched away in her youth, and her father, whom she loved and idolised, still little more than middle aged, and yet a wreck, his life almost a living death. For a year more he stayed on in the old home, but at the end of that time he became completely paralysed and was taken away to the home of his brother-in-law, M. Guérin to be nursed. He was not able to be present even at Theresa's taking of the veil on September 24th. 1890, and on July 29th. 1894, God took him to himself. It was only once Theresa saw him during his illness. He was carried to the parlour of the Carmel to bid adieu to his children—and as he left he could only point upwards, and in a voice broken with tears murmur the words "In heaven." This humiliating and long drawn out agony had its share in doing our Lord's work in Theresa's soul ; there was little room for self-complacency or earthly brightness in her mind, when her venerated father and king, as she lovingly called him, was thus crushed down under his affliction. And on this natural foundation our Lord still continued His work of leading her soul onwards, along the path generation after generation of saints have trod.

Father Faber, as a result of his minute study of the lives of the saints, tells us of six stages of their progress. First comes obedience to the Commandments of God and the precepts of the Church ; secondly, thirdly and fourthly, strong and loving instincts for the (a) glory of God, (b) the interests of Jesus, and (c) the salvation of souls ; fifthly an intense love of suffering and voluntary austerities, accompanied by terrific interior trials, and what

mystics call passive purgations of spirit; and sixthly, supernatural states of prayer, unusual gifts and miraculous powers.

We may have noticed that from the date of what she calls her "conversion" at Christmas 1886, till she entered the Carmel, Theresa, though a child only in years, had yet in a moment attained an advanced stage of sanctity, and could be numbered amongst those whom Father Faber speaks of as the "great middle class of the Church," in which class he elsewhere tells us most of the Church's rulers and workers are numbered.

Now in the shelter of Carmel, with exceptional helps in the atmosphere of sanctity, she seems almost imperceptibly to pass from the stage of detachment and engrossing love of our divine Lord, into the mysterious stage of avidity for suffering, followed later by the still more unusual gift of finding her *only* pleasure in suffering. This suffering too, in which she will alone place her complacency, will not be mere material pain or natural disappointment, but also terrible spiritual trials such as feeling an entire loss of comfort or assurance in her faith, severe and real temptations to disbelieve entirely in the supernatural, as well as feelings of dereliction and rejection by God, a sort of higher development of the scruples by which she had formerly been tried in her childhood. Now trials such as these are very real and serious trials even for saints—and yet Theresa's love of suffering soon became such a reality, that she was pleased in her higher nature, and found peace only so long as she was thus stretched on the rack; when she was free from pain she was even disquieted and looked forward to an early renewal of her crucifixion.

The natural means which was to form the ground-work of such high sanctity was the distressing illness of her beloved father. Truly she had eaten the bread of affliction from her very babyhood, and it was on this rending of her heartstrings her sanctity was to be based. It has, no doubt, occurred to us more than once that had Theresa lived through her early years a natural happy home-life, surrounded by the unchequered love of father and mother, the Church of God would probably have had one saint the less.

It must not be thought that her sanctity gave her a feeling of insensibility as regards her father's humiliating illness. Far from it. Her letters at this period show how constantly it occupied her mind and how she wrestled with the mystery of suffering until the

grace of God made plain to her the meaning of such trials, showing that they are a necessary means of sanctification—without them in fact spiritual development would be stunted. The history of the world all the way through from the Patriarchs downwards has shown us generation on generation after what seems but a few years of sheltered home-life, each setting out in turn on its weary, solitary pilgrimage through the desert of life towards its real home.

Celine, of all the sisters was now alone the solace and ministering angel of her father in his sore affliction, and Theresa's letters to her from the Carmel show how bravely both sisters bore their heavy cross and what an occasion of merit it was for them both. Thus, in January 1889, when the final blow was impending, Theresa writes to Celine pathetically. "Now we have nothing more to hope for on earth—the cool mornings are over and gone—for us suffering alone remains! How enviable is our destiny! The very Seraphim in heaven are jealous of our happiness." To her sister Marie she also opens her heart: "Time has flown since those happy hours spent together in our dear nest. Jesus has visited us and found us worthy to be tried in the crucible of suffering." And again, later to Celine, in February 1889: "Celine, far from complaining to our Lord of this cross He sends us, I cannot realise the infinite love which has led Him to treat us in this way. Our dear father must indeed be loved by God, so as to have given him so much suffering. How piercingly delightful it is for us to be humbled along with him. Humiliation is the only process by which saints are formed, that I know; and I also know that our trial is a mine of gold for us to develop. It is our martyrdom which is beginning . . . together let us enter the arena, my darling sister, and let us offer our sufferings to Jesus for the salvation of souls."

Later on in the following month, March 1889, she writes again: "Now we weep as we remember Sion, for 'how shall we sing the song of the Lord in a strange land?' (Ps. cxxxvi. 4). The hymn of suffering is ever on our lips. Exceeding bitter is the chalice Jesus offers us. Let us not withdraw our lips from it but let us suffer in peace. He who says *peace* does not say joy, or at least sensible joy; to suffer in peace it suffices to accept right willingly all that our Lord wills. Do not let us imagine we can find love without suffering."

In the July of the following year, 1890, she again recurs to the humiliation of their father's illness. "And our beloved father! Oh, how my heart is breaking for him; but how can we complain since our Lord Himself was looked upon *as one struck by God and afflicted?* (Is. liii. 4). In this great sorrow let us forget ourselves and pray for priests—let our lives be entirely devoted to them." At her profession, she formally affirmed that this work of making intercession for God's priests, was her principal object in entering the Carmel.

Though she says she loves and prefers suffering it was not through insensibility—on the contrary the suffering she thirsted for, pierced her to the very heart. This is what she wrote the day before she received the veil as a professed Sister. In spite of her father's illness she had hoped he might possibly be sufficiently well to be carried to the little chapel of the Carmel to assist at the ceremony, but it was not to be. Neither could her good Bishop be present, and she tells us things went wrong in other ways as well. Her letter on this occasion throws much light on her admirable resignation, and especially on her love of suffering: "O Celine, how can I tell you what is happening within my soul? What a crushing blow! And yet I feel it is inflicted by a loving Hand, by a Hand divinely jealous! All was ready for my espousals, but do you not see something was still wanting to the feast? It is true Jesus had already lavished many jewels on me, but no doubt there was one of peerless beauty still wanting; this priceless diamond Jesus Himself has given me to-day . . . Papa cannot come to-morrow! Celine, I confess I have cried bitterly . . . tears are still flowing from my eyes while I write, so that I can scarcely hold my pen. You know how intensely I longed to see our dearest father again; but now I feel it is God's will that he should not be at my feast. God has allowed it simply to try our love. Jesus wishes me to be an orphan; He wishes that I should be alone with Him, so that He may unite Himself more closely to me. He wishes too to give me back in heaven these quite lawful joys that he has denied me in this our land of exile. To-day's trial is one of those sorrows that are hard to understand: a joy was held out to us—a joy easily realisable and quite natural. We put out our hands to take it—and it eluded our grasp. . . . . To-morrow's feast will be one of tears for us, but I feel Jesus will be greatly consoled."

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LISIEUX

ROAD FROM "LES BUISSONNETS" TO BENEDICTINE CONVENT

"As a set off to my troubles at school, I luckily was able to go back to my father every evening."

A few weeks later, when Theresa feels she is at last embarked for good on the vocation which will occupy the whole of her life, seeing life with its sorrows as in one long perspective, she strives to comfort her sister Celine, who heart-brokenly had to stand by and see the shadows settling down one by one on their beloved father :—" My darling sister," she writes, " I quite realise all you are suffering. I know your anguish and I share it. Oh, if I could but share with you the peace that Jesus has instilled into my soul in the midst of my tears. *Be comforted—all passes away.* Our life of yesterday is spent ; death too will pass away ; and then we shall rejoice in life, the true life, for countless ages—for evermore." So heavy is the cross they have to endure in their father's affliction that they feel they have already lost him though three years more of life yet remain. Thus, in April 1891, she writes again: " My darling little sister—Three years ago our hearts had not yet been broken, and happiness beamed upon us here below. Then Jesus looked down on us, and this glance has meant for us floods of tears, though at the same time it has flooded us with grace and love. God has snatched away from us him whom we loved with such deep affection—was it not that we might be able to say in all truth : 'Our Father Who art in heaven'? . . . . Dearest sister, the shadows will soon melt away, the rays of the eternal Sun will replace the bitter hoar-frosts of winter . . . Soon we shall find ourselves in our true country ; soon our childhood's joys—those Sunday evenings, those outpourings of our hearts, will be given back to us for ever ! " In her autobiography Theresa also harks back to the stress and sorrow of the closing years of her father's life, saying—" Later on in heaven we shall love to recall these dark days of exile. Truly the three years of my father's martyrdom seem to me the sweetest and most fruitful of our lives. I would not exchange them for the most sublime ecstacies, and my heart cries out in its gratitude for such a priceless treasure :—' We have rejoiced for the days wherein Thou hast afflicted us ! ' (Ps. lxxxix. 1.) Precious and sweet was this bitter cross, and our hearts breathed only sighs of love and gratitude. We walked no longer—we ran ; we flew along the paths of perfection."

It was in this wise that Theresa and her sisters gained the key to the mystery of suffering and learned the lesson that in order to gain eternal happiness it was more than worth while to suffer

keenly the loss of all earthly happiness and to choose to be buffeted and despised here below.

It must, however, be borne in mind that this willing and intelligent acceptance of suffering and trial was not set off by spiritual consolations and transports of enthusiasm, in the heat of which the trials she endured would scarcely be noticed, or merely would be ripples on the surface of her soul. No, the iron of tribulation entered into her very soul, because in His watchful care of her so as to ground her perfection on the firm rock of humility, such crosses fell upon a soul that was already humbled and emptied of self by being deprived also of all spiritual sweetness. She bears witness to this also : " My desire for sufferings had had its fill. In spite of this, however, my attraction for them in no way grew less, and soon also my soul shared in the ordeal my heart was going through. My spiritual aridity increased, and I found comfort neither in heaven nor on earth ; yet in the midst of these waters of tribulation that I had yearned for, I was the happiest of mortals."

Soon, under the impact of these various spiritual and natural forces, we see developing under our eyes Theresa's characteristic type of sanctity—the sanctity of a soul that will ever remain the soul of a little child—of a soul that will love our divine Lord with all the unaffected spontaneity and simplicity of a child's love for its mother.

If one may say so, in the natural order Theresa was in many ways deprived of the happy childhood that in the ordinary course of things should have been her portion. It was, as she says above, a giving up here of the semblance, in order that she might enjoy the reality in heaven. In her babyhood her mother's love was snatched away from her. Then followed ten years of sorrow before the afflicted family lived down the shock. Then came Theresa's conversion and call to religion, but by this time her father's health was visibly failing. While still younger than many a schoolgirl she faces the isolation and austerity of the Carmelite contemplative life, and brought along with her into her new life, the inexperience, want of training, and necessarily immature ways of one who in the natural order still yearned for a loving mother's constant watchful care and a father's love. Then came her father's living death, accompanied by a deprivation of the enthusiasm and spiritual sweetness that so often buoys up even

for years young aspirants to the religious life. She was, we must remember, still a growing child, who was scarcely fitted for the strict observance and austerities of one of the most severe Orders in the Church, whose rule is more than sufficient to strain often to breaking point those of full age and strong constitution. It is not surprising then to find Theresa showing signs of chronic fatigue and overstrain even at the commencement of her religious life. She is worn out by watching, by her anxiety to observe the rule and discharge her new and unaccustomed duties—the long hours of Office in choir add to her fatigue—in loving sympathy with her sisters, she is weary too with sorrow for her father's affliction—and so what wonder if so far from the Convent life seeming ideal, it is the sheerest prose. She sleeps during her meditation, and after the previous night's long hours' strain and fast, even when she receives our Lord in Holy Communion, with a sigh of almost relief her little head drops in slumber.

In Retreat she fares no better. Let us listen to her own words. "Need I tell you, dear Mother, about the retreat before my profession? Far from receiving consolation during it, a state of utter aridity, only stopping short at the feeling of abandonment by God, was my portion. Jesus, as is usual with Him, was sleeping in my little skiff. How rarely do souls suffer Him to sleep in peace in their midst. This good Master is so wearied with continually putting Himself out and making advances that He eagerly avails Himself of the repose I offer Him. He will in all probability not awake until my great retreat begins in eternity; but instead of being grieved at this, it gives me the keenest pleasure. In truth I am very far from being a saint, as this frame of mind is evident proof. I ought not to rejoice in my dryness of soul, but rather attribute it to my slight degree of fervour and fidelity. I should also be disconsolate at the way I fall asleep so often during my prayers and my thanksgivings after Communion. Well, for all that I am not disconsolate. I reflect that *little children* are equally dear to their parents whether they are asleep or awake—I remember, too, that for serious operations patients are put to sleep by doctors, and I know that 'the Lord knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we are but dust.' (Ps. cii., 14). My retreat for profession, therefore, like all the succeeding ones, was one of great aridity; but for all that the best means of pleasing God and practising virtue, were then clearly revealed to me."

Herein at last we see the germ of her characteristic type of sanctity coming before her mind, the result of the way along which our Lord Himself has been so long leading her. Just because she is still but a little child, she feels she is pleasing to the Most High. She still feels within herself the need of loving parents' care, and harking back to her memories of how children are loved by holy and devoted parents, she throws herself into our Lord's arms, because it is He who now has taken for her the place of both father and mother. She remembers her mother did not love her less, but rather more for the sake of her baby faults. Now she sees her faults more than ever, partly through her failures to carry out the external rule, and also as a consequence of her acute self-observation, a heritage from the scruples of her early years. In the old days she would have become discontented with herself—would have repined and fretted ; but now all that is past—besides she is almost too tired and sorrow-driven to fret actively over trifles. One thing alone remains, and that is to make reparation for all her shortcomings by spending herself in endless repeated acts of love towards our divine Lord. If she succeeds, if she finds peace as when her soul was flooded with it on the morning of September 8th. 1890, the day of her profession, let her multiply acts of fervent thrilling love ; but if she fails, let the acts of love still go on, supplemented by little sacrifices so as to make up for what she thinks may be wanting in her in other respects. It was in this way, as the result of her youth, circumstances and the loving inspirations of divine grace, that by sheer force of love, her way straightened out before her ; her *little way*, as she called it, saying in her humility : "I am but a little one, and not holy like the saints."

Thus, by the loving ways of His grace, and by experimental knowledge, did our Lord manifest to His little spouse the path which generations of saints have trod, the path of loving surrender to God manifested by fidelity in the discharge of *little* everyday duties, by loving kindnesses, and little sacrifices constantly repeated, and by endless repeated acts of love that are made all the more earnestly and fervently to our Lord if perchance through any human frailty she conceives she has failed in her service of Him.

This truly supernatural character of her teaching comes most opportunely in these days of pride and natural activity, when

even religion is beginning to be looked upon as merely an instrument for moral self-improvement. Man would set himself up as his own end, as against St. Ignatius' fundamental proposition : " Man was created for this one end, to praise the Lord his God—to show Him reverence—to *serve Him.*" God, not self, must be the end of all religion, and we serve God not so much by moral self-improvement and right conduct (a characteristically Pelagian British error) as by loving Him and adoring Him with all our hearts and minds and souls as our Creator, and the sole object of all our love.

This lesson taught her by the inspirations of divine grace was confirmed by a holy Religious who gave the Sisters the general retreat immediately following Theresa's profession. He seems to have been one of the very few directors to whom Theresa was able to open her heart, possibly because he seems to have been specially enlightened to understand the state of her soul. He also encouraged her to set out in full sail on the ocean of confidence and love, on which she had so far longed to advance, but had failed through want of courage. He also gave Theresa the comforting assurance that our Lord was not pained by her little indeliberate faults, as she had hitherto childishly believed, and added : " At this moment in dealing with you I hold His place, and I assure you from Him that He is well pleased with your soul."

Theresa was overjoyed at these consoling words : " I had never before been told that it was possible for faults not to pain God ; this assurance filled me with joy and helped me to bear with patience the exile of this life. It was also in very truth the echo of my inmost thoughts. I had long thought that our Lord is more loving than a mother and I have sounded the depths of more than one mother's heart ! I know that a mother is ever ready to forgive her child's small heedless faults. How often have I not had this sweet experience ! No reproach could ever have touched me more than one single kiss from my mother. My nature is such that fear makes me shrink back while under love's influence I not only advance—I fly."

Two months after this retreat the venerable Foundress of the Carmel of Lisieux, Mother Geneviève of St. Theresa, went in a ripe old age to receive the reward of her labours. Shortly before her holy death, she confirmed Theresa in the resolutions of her retreat by the short pregnant counsel : " Serve the Lord in peace and in joy. Remember our God is the God of peace."

It was this spirit of confidence and love that enabled her to make the best of her weakness and fatigue when she had at last received our Lord in Communion. "What can I tell you, dear Mother, about my thanksgiving after Communion then (when allowed daily Communion), as well as now? There is no time when I feel less consolation. But is not this quite as it should be, seeing that I desire to receive our Lord, not for my *own* satisfaction, but simply to give *Him* pleasure. I picture my soul as a place of waste ground, and beg our Lady to cart away all the heaps of rubbish (that is to say, all my imperfections), and then I beseech her to set up upon it a splendid pavilion worthy of heaven, adorning it with her own adornments. Then I invite all the angels and saints to come and sing canticles of love, and it seems to me Jesus is well pleased to see Himself received so grandly, and I share in his joy. But all this does not prevent distractions and drowsiness from coming to bother me, and so not infrequently I resolve to continue my thanksgiving throughout the day since I made it so badly in choir. You see, dear Mother, I am very far from walking by the way of fear: I can always find a way of being happy and of *profiting by my imperfections*, and our Lord Himself encourages me in this path."

As was fitting, with this childlike love of our Lord, her only wishes were not for the goods of this world, which she despised, but in common with many of her predecessors amongst the Saints, a childish delight in and yearning for the exquisite works of God's own hands. Thus for her Clothing day her only thought was not of her dress, but that she should see *snow* fall upon it, just as her eyes had first opened on a snow-clad world; and though the weather was bright and mild, when she came out of the chapel to change her dress, lo and behold, the quadrangle was white with snow!

So also one of her greatest sacrifices in entering the Carmel was saying good-bye to the spring flowers which she should never see growing again—but being appointed Sacristan, she found her hands full of all the flowers she had loved best, cornflowers, field-poppies, marguerites—only one was missing, the humble looking little purple vetch, and soon it too, without her asking for it, came to gladden her eyes, and show that in the least as in the greatest, God gives a hundredfold, even in this life, to those who have left all for His love.

CHAPTER XIII

THE ASCENT OF MOUNT CARMEL

We are now approaching the most mysterious and difficult period of Sister Theresa's life, a period in which all the generosity and willing acceptance of sorrow upon sorrow in her early years bore visible fruit even on this earth.

She was now a fully professed religious: with her father's death and the entry of her sister, Celine, into the Carmel of Lisieux, all the home ties of her childhood were broken for good, and the Convent was now her only home.

The keeping of the rule that she had learned so slowly at first had now become second nature to her. All through her father's long and painful illness she kept up bravely and showed no sign of all she was enduring. Nay, more, this cross being a means of sanctification, had its share in her formation as a perfect religious.

In the early years she experienced keenly all the irksomeness, the petty trials, combined with the monotony of community life, a sort of spiritual hair-shirt that makes community life itself a keener trial and a heavier burden than physical austerities.

She could scarcely have been human had she been free from the necessity of encountering and conquering the difficulties arising inevitably from the living together of so many different types of character. In spite of all that had gone before Theresa was eminently human, and so the eventual killing out of all natural likes and repugnances was no small undertaking. Within a few years she succeeded in a task that many earnest religious never completely accomplish. Thus the restlessness, or *gauche* ways of other of the Sisters often got on the nerves of the over-strung, exquisitely balanced mind of Theresa, but few ever suspected it, she seemed always so equable and bright. If a Sister on washing day splashed Theresa in her vigorous putting forth of energy, Theresa, by force of not even wiping the warm soap-suds from her face, began actually at last to find pleasure in the sprinkling—if a Sister near her in the chapel fidgetted, by sheer

force of will, she soon became oblivious of it. There was also the opposite danger of her taking a special liking to those members of the community to whom she naturally felt more attracted ; but from the beginning there was never any indication of her showing the slightest sign of any such preference. Though two of her own sisters were already members of the community, Theresa had begun by making clear to herself she had not entered religion to enjoy their presence. No one in the community could ever detect any signs of preference for her sisters' company—when even she was permitted by the rule to speak to them, she made no advances. Later on she was appointed as aid to Sister Agnes of Jesus, her sister Pauline—but this only entailed on her more than usual self-abnegation, as Theresa, in accordance with the rule, never would speak to her sister except for strictly necessary matters. She not only kept clear of any particular friendship with any of her fellow novices, but used her influence with them to make them carefully discriminate in the affection they owed their Mother Prioress, between the supernatural love due to her as the representative of our Lord, and any merely natural regard for her on the score of her personal qualities.

Even as a child she had long ago acquired the habit of never excusing herself or complaining. This characteristic still remained, only it was carried to a still higher point of perfection.

In all things she never wished to do her own will, but by preference was always on the watch to learn the wishes of others in order to make them the rule of her action.

She in every way always endeavoured to make herself the servant of all not only openly, but even in secret, endeavouring to do hidden kindnesses for the Sisters, which could be seen by God's eye alone.

Perhaps the most idyllic interlude of this life of constant loving service of others is Sister Theresa's own inimitably humorous account of her experiences as a novice in looking after the comfort in the refectory of a certain infirm old Sister Peter, who was fast getting beyond looking after herself. It was with much misgiving Theresa volunteered for the task, for no one could ever succeed in winning the good Sister's full approbation. The first stage of the proceedings was that of leading her forth from the choir at ten minutes to six, so as to be in good time for supper at six. So at the appointed sign, the *petite* young novice of sixteen, enveloped

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LISIEUX

A TYPICAL BUSINESS STREET

"One evening coming home from school I and my cousin Marie were playing at being hermits and keeping to the footpath we both started walking home with our eyes shut. We flattered ourselves we were safe from traffic but we reckoned without taking count of a pile of packing cases outside a shop door. . . . We picked ourselves up and ran home for our lives."

in her huge habit many sizes too big for her, cut with a view to her growing up, her eyes dancing with suppressed merriment, taking her courage in both hands, would decorously present herself at the good Sister's side—first the stool had to be taken up in a certain sacrosanct manner—and then the procession to the refectory started. Little Theresa walked behind the good Sister, the stool in one hand, the other firmly holding her belt. Alas, there were ever many vicissitudes on the journey. Did the dear old Sister make a false step as she shuffled along, she would stop to exclaim against the atrocious way she was being held up. "Oh, my dear child," she would complain—"you are going ever so quick—I am sure I shall fall and break my poor old bones." Then poor little Theresa, exercising all her delicacy of touch, would retain a firm hold without the good Sister feeling it. Next panic would seize her—"Oh, my dear, don't let me go by myself—I don't feel your hand—you haven't got hold of me at all—I shall go right down—I'm sure of it—Oh, dear, I always knew you were much too young to look after me!" The ancient Sister was disappointed in one thing, for the much prophesied catastrophe never came off, and the perilous passage to the refectory was always accomplished in safety. Then opened a fresh chapter—the invalid had to be set up in her place, made comfortable, and her sleeves turned back, all according to a certain fixed ritual, after which the little novice was dismissed. Soon Theresa noticed that the good Sister was getting past even cutting up her bread, so without being asked, Theresa undertook this additional service. It was this that finally won the dear old Sister's heart, especially as it had been done without her asking, (she being reluctant to admit her inability), but no small contributory factor to the Sister's satisfaction, was that as Theresa left her the little novice's merry eyes and mobile mouth all had their share in her parting beaming smile.

All this was but the carrying out in her daily life of the ideal she had set before herself so early as the day of her religious profession. "My God," she said, "give me martyrdom of soul or body . . . or rather give me both the one and the other." Our Lord Who heard all her prayers, granted this in more abundant measure than the rest, causing "the floods of divine tenderness pent up in His divine Heart to overflow into the soul of His little Spouse." This she spoke of as the "martyrdom of love," under-

standing by it that " to dedicate oneself as a victim of love is not to be dedicated to sweetness and consolations ; it is to offer oneself to all that is painful and bitter, because Love lives only by sacrifice . . and the more we would surrender ourselves to love, the more we must surrender ourselves to suffering."

Therefore because she aimed at nothing less than " the loftiest height of love," the only way to attain its summit was by the path of continual and intense suffering. It was along this path we shall see her divine Master led her, and when eventually she reached her goal nothing then stood between her and death. But we anticipate: many and great and mysterious are to be her trials in the ascent of Mount Carmel. We only at times catch imperfect glimpses of the dread operations that afflicted her most pure but gifted soul in the crucible of suffering—we, however, see enough to make plain to us how little has been revealed about all she went through ; but such as it is, it is sufficient to make us tremble at the thought that is only by such processes of purification and refining either here or in purgatory, that the natural soul of man can be fitted for the vision of God.

We have mentioned that Theresa took her place with the professed Sisters of the Carmel on September 24th. 1890, the feast of Our Lady of Ransom. Within a year occurred the death of the venerable foundress of the Carmel of Lisieux, Mother Geneviève of St. Theresa, a native of Poictiers, who left her pleasant convent home in the south to go amongst strangers and found the new Carmel at Lisieux in hard, remote Normandy. Truly she saw her reward before the end came !

Towards the close of that same year, 1891, the virulent epidemic of influenza that swept across Europe claimed its victims even in the Carmel of Lisieux as elsewhere. Theresa took it but slightly, and then while still only convalescent, this child of eighteen, with the help of two other Sisters, dragged herself about endeavouring at one and the same time to keep up the religious observance and nurse the dying Sisters. On January 2nd. 1892, her nineteenth birthday she, with the infirmarian, was alone present at the death of Mother Sub-Prioress—two more deaths quickly followed. Theresa now, in addition to all her other duties, was obliged to do the sacristy work single-handed. A few weeks later, rising before the others to see to her duties, she entered the cell of another of the Sisters to find her already dead, lying dressed

on her bed: she had died all alone. Theresa was by now the trained practical religious; she in no way lost her nerve, but ran down to the sacristy for a blessed candle, and placed on the dead Sister's head a wreath of roses, according to the Rule.

This terrible visitation that swept in that year through all civilised countries, leaving so much of suffering and death behind it, was also in the designs of God one factor the more in the formation of Theresa's character and sanctity. She was, as it were, brought prematurely face to face with death in all its forms with scarcely any one to support or encourage her.

As she was almost the only one of the whole community able to attend choir, she had the unusual privilege for those days of receiving Holy Communion every day, and when the time of affliction was past and things settled down into the old groove, Theresa often found herself tempted to wish for all her troubles back again if only she could receive our Lord every day.

She also learnt another lesson, not to fear death. Much as she was tried by the sight of the agony or sudden deaths of the Sisters, she noticed with encouragement how in all cases "the Sisters left this life for a happier one without any struggle; an expression of heavenly joy shone on their faces, and they seemed only to be enjoying a pleasant sleep."

As a result of all she had gone through during the years 1891 and 1892 Theresa had acquired a religious experience and self-reliance beyond her years. Her calm, sensible, practical mind, and maturity of judgment were especially remarkable. Her Mother Prioress had especially marked her out as one who in a marked way had all the qualifications of an ideal religious Superior, and began already to count on having at her side for many years to come, the advantages of her discretion and governing qualities, and of her becoming perhaps later the pioneer of some new foundation.

It was about this period too that Theresa had another experience that brought into relief her rare power of self-repression. We have already mentioned how the presence of her two beloved sisters in the Convent was for her only an occasion of fresh sacrifices. She behaved towards them exactly as she would have done to other excellent religious who were her seniors. She tells us on one occasion, how, having continually to meet her sister Pauline when the Rule enjoined silence, she at last almost persuaded herself

that even her dearest " little mother " had become alienated from her.

At length her own " little mother " was actually elected Prioress, and she might well have rejoiced that henceforth she could always speak to her freely, as according to the Rule, she could at any time consult her and pour out her soul to her. But she is a different Theresa now to the old days ; sacrifice has now become her daily food. Her only ambition was that she should be the lowest and the least and no one saw less of the Mother Prioress.

With these few exceptions the intermediate years of Theresa's life in the Convent passed without outward incident. The operations of sanctity were going on steadily in her soul, but beyond her earnestness, her singleness of purpose, her humility, self-denial, love of others and minute fidelity to her Rule, there was little to distinguish her outwardly from any other fervent saintly religious.

She was going through a clearly marked definite stage of the spiritual life, a stage that through her unique concentration and earnestness would be comparatively short—but still a necessary preliminary to the higher things God had in store for her before she reached the end of her short pilgrimage.

All through this period, as at other times, she was ever a martyr to dryness. She lived and walked by faith and intellect alone, not by emotional exaltation, and no amount of such intellectual discernment, though it provided the driving power for her life of constant and supernatural endeavour, was sufficient as a rule, to stir up in the lower part of her soul sensible sweetness in the service of God. As a matter of fact in the natural order the Holy Spirit was working on a soul that was singularly free from any excess of emotion—a soul that was in its essence simple to a degree, because it saw all things so clearly, and acted according to the cold light of fact, not on make-believe. Quite unconsciously time after time she tells us of trifles that reveal the bent of her mind, showing how with all its training, experience and keen outlook on life, the inner self ever remained that of an unspoilt child. Speaking of her dreams she says charmingly :—" I attach no importance to my dreams, and indeed they seldom have any special meaning, though I often wonder how it is that whereas I think of God all the day, my mind does not dwell on Him more in my sleep. *Generally I dream of the woods and the flowers, the*

brooks and the sea, and nearly always of pretty children ; or I chase birds and butterflies such as I have never seen. But if my dreams are sometimes poetical, they are never mystical."

We have said this absence of any emotional exaltation was, as a rule, Theresa's ordinary state. There were, however, some few exceptions she alludes to as standing out in contrast to her ordinary experience, mentioned by her under obedience in reply to the questions of her Mother Prioress. She described these experiences as " transports of love." The first she remembered, took place during her noviciate, and lasted a whole week. This might be set down by some as being partly due to joy and natural exaltation at being at last safely started in her religious vocation, so that she felt like walking on air. Her own account to some extent tallies with this. She explains—" it seemed as though a veil were thrown over all earthly things. But I was not then consumed by a *real fire.* I was able to bear those transports of love without expecting to see the ties that bound me to earth give way." This experience was repeated she says " several times," but as soon as the feeling of exaltation was over, she came down to earth once more, and dryness returned to her heart, just as if she had never known or experienced anything beyond the bare life of faith.

It was during these early years of her religious life from about her seventeenth till her twentieth year she made the works of St. John of the Cross her study, and received from them many spiritual lights on her progress, which at this stage coincided with the experiences he describes in the " Spiritual Canticle " and his Hymns. Later on it is illuminating to know that she had got beyond even these advanced mystical works and could find assistance only in the *Sacred Scriptures* and the *Imitation of Christ ;* —"Later on, even now all spiritual authors leave me cold and dry. However beautiful and touching a book may be, my heart does not respond, and I read without understanding, or if I understand, I cannot meditate. In my helplessness the Holy Scriptures and the Imitation are of the greatest assistance ; in them I find a hidden manna, genuine and pure."

We are now to some extent able to picture to ourselves her religious life of perfection at this stage. She is still building on the original foundation of the illumination received on her " conversion " at Christmas 1886, that God is all in all, and that

all created things are but fleeting and negligible. This was a cold, clear, intellectual conclusion taught her from above—" I had no guide and no light but that which shone within my heart." Joined with this was also the unquestioned settled conviction that God loved her and all creatures with a consuming unalterable love—that she had no alternative but to return that love with all her mind and all her soul, even if she felt no emotional feelings. She also realised that this love of our divine Lord, Who does not despise the work of His own hands, and Who knows the clay of which we are made, is infinite Mercy. Knowing our frailty and native weakness he is only too willing to overlook our scarcely deliberate venial sins provided in the main the attitude of our minds is to return His love. Even these slight falls may be a gain if for each infidelity we redouble our acts of love and purpose amendment in the future ; and so in this spirit she practised her " little way " as she called it of the service of God, in the spirit of complete surrender to our Lord's good pleasure, and detached even from all anxiety for *self-improvement.*

It was only in the first months after her conversion that any beginnings of conflict between her higher and her lower nature troubled her ; but after a while she was able to suppress them as well as the slightest outward manifestation without much trouble, as soon as they tended to arise.

We can well imagine how perfect then her religious life must have appeared to the keen and experienced eyes of her first Prioress, Mother Mary Gonzaga. When self-seeking is non-existent, perfection is not far off. Theresa then during these early years was a model religious in every way, and her very life was an inspiration to her religious Sisters who soon finding how dependable she was, and that she was in no way the creature of whim or impulse, felt they could always rely upon her under all and every circumstance, as a living example of a perfect religious.

She, therefore had the name of being regular, exact, and mortified in all things—never asking for dispensations or exceptions —divested of all earthly affections—always willing to fulfil any duty no matter how humiliating or unpleasant—never seeking to do pleasant things or even things to which she was attracted spiritually—never over eager, never impulsive—always bright, always cheerful no matter how great her sufferings and trials—always only too willing to help others and to shoulder their burdens,

and withal ever sensible, matter of fact, practical, with a saving sense of humour in all she said or did, and especially gifted far beyond her years as a wise counsellor.

The sufferings of her early years were still bearing fruit in her soul. From them she had early learnt the lesson that suffering is an indispensable condition of spiritual progress and union with God, and so came to love and desire suffering with her higher intellectual mind as the quickest way of attaining Him her heart's desire. So it was that though suffering caused her exquisite pain, yet she never felt easy in her mind unless it were present with her—eventually she placed all her joy in suffering, and yearned for its continuance and increase until in the end she died a willing victim of love.

It was this love of suffering for God's sake as the instrument of His loving desire to unite us more closely to Himself, that counterbalanced the martyrdom Theresa endured especially during the last two or three years of her dear father's life when he whom they loved so tenderly was as helpless as a baby.

Her letters to her two sisters in the Carmel throw much light on the very unusual and perfect dispositions in which she set out on her religious life. Thus, in September 1890, just before her Profession, she wrote an account of her mind to her elder sister, Pauline. This is what she said. "Before starting my Beloved asked me in what land I wished to travel, and what route I wished to follow. I told him I had only one desire, that of reaching the summit of the *mountain of Love.*"

"Thereupon roads innumerable spread before my gaze, but so many of these were perfect that I felt incapable of choosing any of my own free will. Then I said to my divine Guide—'Thou knowest the spot I desire to reach, and for whose sake I would climb the mountain; Thou knowest Him whom I love, and Whom alone I wish to please. For Him only I set out on this journey; lead me, therefore by the paths of His choice; my joy shall be full if only He be pleased.'"

"And our Lord took me by the hand and led me into an underground passage . . . . My Spouse speaks not a word, and I say nothing save that I love Him more than myself; and in the depths of my heart I feel this is so, for I am more His than my own. I cannot see that we are advancing towards our journey's goal since we are going along under ground; and yet without

knowing how, it seems to me we are nearing the summit of the mountain."

"I give my thanks to Jesus for making me walk in darkness, in it I enjoy profound peace. Willingly would I consent to remain through all my religious life in this gloomy passage into which He has led me. I desire only that my darkness may obtain light for sinners. I am happy, nay, most happy, *to be without all consolation.* I should be ashamed were my love like that of those earthly brides who are ever glancing towards their bridegrooms' hands, to see if some present has been brought them ; or else at the face to catch the loving smile which fills them with delight."

"Theresa, the little Spouse of Jesus, loves Him for Himself ; she only looks on the Face of her Beloved to catch a glimpse of the tears that delight her with their hidden charm. She longs to wipe away those tears . . . *Jesus* . . . *Jesus* . . . *Oh! I would so love Him! Love Him as he has never yet been loved.* At all costs I must win the palm of St. Agnes ; *if it cannot be mine through blood, I must win it by love.*"

In the following year 1891 she again writes in the same strain to her sister. "Love can take the place of a long life"—(she is always prophetically insisting on this variant of "*consummatus (in brevi,*" "being made perfect in a short time."—Wisd. iv. 13—"Jesus does not consider time for He is eternal. *He only looks at love* . . . I do not desire what can be felt ; if only Jesus feels it, that is enough for me." And as regards her faults she adds. "Jesus can grant me the grace never to offend him more, or rather never to commit any faults, but those *which do not offend Him or give Him pain ; faults which avail but to humble me and strengthen my love.* There is no one to lean on apart from Jesus."

A little later writing again she still pursues this same subject of our Lord occupying the *whole* of her thoughts. "What happiness it is for us to be so entirely hidden that no one gives us a thought—to be unknown even to those with whom we live! My little Mother, I long to be unknown to every one of God's creatures! I have never desired glory amongst men, and if their contempt used to attract my heart, I have realised that even this is too glorious for me and I ardently desire to be forgotten."

To her eldest sister, Marie, she is, if anything, more explicit about her deprivation of consolation. Writing during the retreat before her profession she explains—"It has been a dreary journey

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THERESA AND HER SISTER CELINE
1887

"Celine had now become a little romp full of mischief, while Theresa had turned into quite a gentle little girl, only overmuch given to tears; so needing someone to stand up for me my dear little sister intrepidly took up the rôle of my champion."

(for your child) towards her bridal day. It is true her Beloved has led her through fertile and striking scenery, but the dark night prevents her admiring, much less appreciating these wonders. Perhaps you think she is unhappy about this. Oh no, on the contrary, she is happy to follow her Beloved for His own sake, and not for the sake of His gifts . . . . Weary of earthly consolation your little child wishes for her Beloved alone. I believe the work of Jesus during this retreat has been to detach me from everything that is not Himself. . . . Did you but know *how great is my joy at giving pleasure to Jesus through my having nothing of my own.* . . . Truly this is the very refinement of all joy—joy we do not feel."

Later again she writes to her same sister, Marie, explaining in illuminating fashion the place of consolation and emotional enthusiasm in the service of God. "How can you ask, if it be possible for you to love God as I love Him! My yearnings for martyrdom are as nothing; it is *not to them* I owe the boundless confidence that I feel within my heart. . . . . *These aspirations are a consolation* Jesus sometimes grants to *weak souls* like mine—and there are many such! But when he withholds this consolation it is a special grace. Remember these words of a holy monk—'the martyrs suffered with joy, and the King of Martyrs in sorrow.' In truth Jesus cried out—'*My Father, remove this chalice from me.*' How then can you think now that my desires are a proof of love. Indeed I know well that it certainly is not this that gives pleasure to God in my soul. *What does please Him is to find me love my littleness, my poverty*; it is the blind trust I have in His mercy. . . . Are you not ready to suffer all that God wills? Yes, I know that this is so; and so if you wish to feel joy in and be attracted towards suffering, you are really seeking your own consolation, because once we love anything suffering disappears. I really do assure you that if we were to go together to martyrdom, you would gain great merit, and I should have none, unless it pleased our Lord to change my dispositions. Dear Sister, I do beg you understand this that to love Jesus and be His victim of love, the more weak and wretched we are, the better are we fitted for this consuming and transfiguring love. The mere desire to be a victim is sufficient; but we must be resigned to remain poor and without natural strength. We must seek Him . . . in abasement and nothingness. Let us then

remain very far from all that is brilliant, loving our littleness, and *content to have no fine feelings.* Then we shall be truly poor in spirit, and Jesus will come to seek us however far off we may be, and He will transform us in the fire of love. . . . It is confidence and confidence alone that will lead us to love. . . Does not fear lead to the thought of the strict Justice that is set before sinners ? But this is not the justice Jesus will reserve for such as love Him. . . . Dearest Godmother, you would like to learn stlll more of the secrets that Jesus confides to your little child, but human speech finds itself unable to repeat what the human heart itself can scarcely conceive. Besides, Jesus imparts knowledge of His secrets to you likewise, for was it not you who taught me."

These chance liftings of the veil undoubtedly disclose a life of more than ordinary detachment and union with God, and there can be little question that such was the opinion of her Mother Prioress who in 1894 apparently before her father's death on July 29th. of that year, appointed Theresa when she was only 21 to the effective position of Novice Mistress. She had not been long in this new position before the long threatened blow fell and good M. Martin after his long and painful purgatory was called by God to Himself. If anything his death was the cessation of a strain for his loving children, but none the less it was the final snapping of all the ties and memories connected with the home of bygone days, their " dear nest." From one point of view his holy death seemed to give Theresa back her father. For some time previously perhaps their greatest cross was the thought he could no longer bear them in mind. Now it was otherwise—they felt sure he knew all, and watched over them now with redoubled love. Theresa, writing to Celine to console the sister who for the long five years had stood on Calvary with their father, says :—" Our dear father makes his presence felt in a way which touches me deeply. After a death lasting for five long years, what joy to find him again as he used to be, nay, more a loving father than ever ! Oh, how he will make up to you for all the care you lavished on him ! You were his angel, now in his turn he will be yours."

Only one earthly wish now remained, and that was that her sister Celine should enter the Carmel ; this was soon granted, she believed, as a result of her father's intercession. Celine being now safe in the novitiate of the Carmel at Lisieux, and so in our

Lord's hands, Theresa felt done with this world, and nothing remained for her but to run her course. She celebrates this occasion with a perfect paean of joy in which for the moment she makes her own the words of St. John of the Cross, who so far had been her guide in the " ascent of Mount Carmel."

" Now have I no desire left, unless it be to love Jesus to distraction ! It is love alone that allures me. I no longer desire either suffering or death, but all the same I love both dearly. Long have I called on them as messengers of joy. Suffering I have had in full measure, and I have thought I was on the point of reaching the everlasting shore. From earliest childhood I have ever imagined that the *little flower* would be plucked in its springtime; now self-abandonment alone is my guide. I have no other compass. I wish never again to pray for anything with eagerness, save the perfect accomplishment of God's holy will in my soul. I feel able to make my own these words of the canticle of our Father, St. John of the Cross :—

' In the inner cellar of my friend well-beloved, I drank, and when I came forth again, in all this plain I recognised naught. I found too I had lost the flock that erstwhile I tended. My soul with all its powers is now devoted to His service, no more I tend my flock. I am now quit of all my tasks, for all my energies are swallowed up in love.'—(Spiritual Canticle).

Or rather as he again says :—

' Since I have known it, *love* is so powerful in work that it can turn to good account, all within me whether good or evil, and transmute my soul into itself.' "—(Hymn to the Deity).

" Oh, how sweet is the way of *love* ! Doubtless one at times may fall and be found wanting to grace ; but love knowing how to turn everything to account, quickly consumes everything that can displease Jesus, leaving in the depths of the heart only a deep and humble peace." There is no question that to the eyes of all in the Carmel a great and wonderful change had come over the youthful inexperienced child postulant of six years before, who now, though only just out of her teens, had become the image of the perfect religious. She herself found her position altered, as with the course of years she was now no longer as it were the baby of the Convent, but a religious of standing and experience, and the trusted adviser and support of the Mother Prioress. Theresa herself felt the change, but it made no difference to her sanctity,

by now safely based on humility. She knew full well she was not in reality so very different from the novice of a few years back, and deep down in her heart she treasured, as she says, those precious drops of dew. the mortifications of other days to remind her that she is still small and frail. Jesus, she explains, well knew that at first His *little flower* needed the life-giving water of humiliations—it was too weak to take root otherwise, and it was to her wise Mother Prioress she owed this great blessing. But, she continues, " finding it is sufficiently watered, He now allows it to expand under the warm rays of a hot sun ; He now wishes it should enjoy His smile, and this He gives it through you, dear Mother. Far from withering it, this bright sun makes the *little flower* grow in a wonderful way. . . . Even were all creatures now to draw near to admire and flatter it, that would not add the least drop of vanity to the true joy it experiences at realising that in God's eyes it is but a poor, worthless thing and nothing more. When I say, that I am indifferent to praise, I am not speaking of the love and confidence you show me ; on the contrary, I am deeply touched by them, but I feel that I now have nothing to fear, and I can now rejoice in them without misgiving, attributing to God all the good He has been graciously pleased to dower me with."

The confidence she alludes to is that in the year 1894, the Mother Prioress wished to appoint her Novice Mistress,but Theresa, while accepting the duties under obedience, would not take the title, and insisted on the Mother Prioress being nominal Mistress—" Meanwhile I know your will, dear Mother. You wish me to carry out at your side a work which is both sweet and easy, and this work I shall complete in heaven. You have said to me as our Lord said to St. Peter : ' Feed my lambs.' I am amazed, for I feel I am so little. I have entreated you to lead to the pasture, your little lambs yourself, and to keep me as a favour among them. You have complied, in some slight degree, with my reasonable wish, and have appointed me as their leading companion rather than their Mistress. . . How is it, dear Mother, that my youth and inexperience have not frightened you. . . . or perhaps you remembered that our Lord is often pleased to give wisdom to little ones. On this earth it is rare to find souls who do not apply to God's infinite power the measure of their own narrow thoughts. . . . It has long, I know, been the custom amongst

men to reckon experience by years for in his youth the holy King David sang to the Lord, ' I am young and despised ' (Ps. cxviii.141), but in the same Psalm he does not fear to say : ' I have had understanding above old men because I sought Thy Commandments. Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my paths ; I have sworn and I am determined to keep the judgments of Thy justice.' (Ps. cxviii. 100-106). And you did not even consider it imprudent one day to assure me that the Divine Master had enlightened my soul and *given me the experience of years.* I am too little now to give way to vanity. I am likewise still too little to know how to use a lot of fine-sounding phrases, so as to give the impression that I am full of humility. I prefer to own in all simplicity that ' He that is mighty hath done great things in me,' and the greatest is that He has shown me my littleness and how incapable I am of anything good."

" You know it has ever been my desire to become a saint, but I have always felt in comparing myself with the Saints that there is between them and myself as great a difference as there is between the unnoticed grain of sand which the passer-by tramples under foot and the mountain whose summit is lost in the clouds. Instead of being discouraged, I said to myself ' God will never inspire desires which cannot be realised, and so I may aspire to sanctity in spite of my littleness. *I shall never really grow up ;* it's quite out of the question. I must then put up with myself such as I am and with my endless imperfections, but I do want to find out a means of getting to heaven by *a little way*, quite straight and very short. . . . . Well, now, I mean to try and find a lift by which I may be raised up to Jesus, for I am too tiny to climb the steep stairway of perfection. I have sought to find in the Sacred Scriptures some suggestion as to what this lift might be which I so much desired, and I read these words uttered by the Eternal Wisdom Itself :—' Whosoever is a *little one*, let him come to Me.' (Prov. iv. 4). Then I drew near to God, feeling sure I had discovered what I sought ; but wishing to know further what He would do to the *little one*, I continued my search and this is what I found :—' You shall be carried at the breasts and upon the knees ; as one whom the mother caresseth, so will I comfort you.' (Is. lvi. 12, 13)."

" Never have words more tender and sweet-sounding ever come to rejoice my soul. Thine arms, O Jesus, are the lift which

must raise me up even unto heaven. To get there I need never grow up ; on the contrary, I must remain *little*, and keep on growing smaller and smaller. O my God, thou hast gone beyond my expectation, and as for myself—' I will sing Thy mercies ! Thou, hast taught me, O Lord, from my youth and till now I have declared thy wonderful works, and thus into old age and grey hairs.' (Ps. lxx. 17, 18). What will this old age be for me ? It seems to me it can be just as well now as later. . . But do not think, dear Mother, that your child is anxious to leave you, through deeming it a greater grace to die in the morning rather than in the evening of life ; what she really values and alone desires is to give pleasure to Jesus."

It is not within the scope of this short study, which aims at following out the stages of her spiritual development, to give any account of the wisdom and maturity of the direction Sister Theresa gave the novices during the few short years they were in her charge. Her wisdom and sayings in the discharge of this important office represented the flower and fruit of all her own long years of obedience to and correspondence with the inspirations of grace.

All the while, however, her own sanctification was going on apace from virtue to virtue ; for, as she says, our Lord was continually leading her onwards in the science of love. Having given all her substance for it, she still felt like the spouse in the Canticle that she had given nothing. She can only sing with the Psalmist " that the Lord is good, that His mercy endureth for ever." (Ps. ciii. 1). She also adds that if everyone were to receive similar favours from God, He would be feared by none, but loved to excess—and that no one would ever commit the least wilful fault—and this through love, not fear. It was under such happy circumstances that the year following her father's death was passed (1894-5). It was, as one might say, the second period of respite given in her short life, before the last great ordeal was to commence; the first period being the season of comparative peace that followed Christmas, 1886. She had now become habituated to keeping the Rule, she was comforted in the thought that once more her beloved father knew and took interest in all she did and was able more effectually to pray for her ; her sister Celine too, was now safe in the Carmel along with her other sisters, and she herself felt without vanity or elation that she was a real help to the Mother Prioress in leading the fresh young souls of the novices to our Lord's feet.

She also knew and realised how our Lord was continually leading her on in His grace and service, and by intellectual spiritual illuminations deepening and extending her knowledge of divine things. Especially was she consoled by what she learnt as to the infinite Mercy and Love of God, Who only asks in return for the goodwill and love of his erring creatures. She felt too she had learned how His Justice had become reconciled with His Mercy, that is to say, His Justice takes our weakness into account, seeing that He knows perfectly the frailty of our nature. This revelation of God's loving mercy and goodness took practical form in her soul in the month of June 1895, by her consecrating herself specially to the merciful Love of God as a holocaust. She was led to this by the thought of holy souls who for the sins of their brethren offer themselves as victims to divine Justice. This did not appeal to Theresa, who by now felt she had to some degree sounded the depths of God's infinite Goodness, which, alas, is ignored and rejected. She saw how hearts on which God was only waiting to pour out the riches of His Love, turned themselves to creatures to seek their happiness in the miserable satisfaction of a moment, instead of casting themselves into the divine Arms, into the unfathomable furnace of infinite Love.

In order then that the love of God that filled her own heart should not merely remain hidden there, she offered herself as a living *victim of divine Love* in order that such Love might be better known and might spread over the whole earth, inflaming everywhere the cold hearts of men.

She embodied this consecration in a solemn written act on the 9th. of June, 1895. As a consequence, what she describes as oceans of grace flooded her soul, and from that day onward she was penetrated and surrounded with love. "Every moment this merciful Love renews me and purifies me, leaving in my soul no trace of sin. I cannot fear Purgatory ; I know I do not merit to enter even, into that place of expiation along with the Holy Souls, but I also know that the fire of Love is more sanctifying than the fire of Purgatory. I know that Jesus could not wish useless sufferings for us, and He would not inspire me with the desires I feel, were He not willing to fulfil them."

She soon too experienced another sign that a new stage of her spiritual progress had commenced with this solemn oblation of herself to God's merciful Love. A few days later she narrates

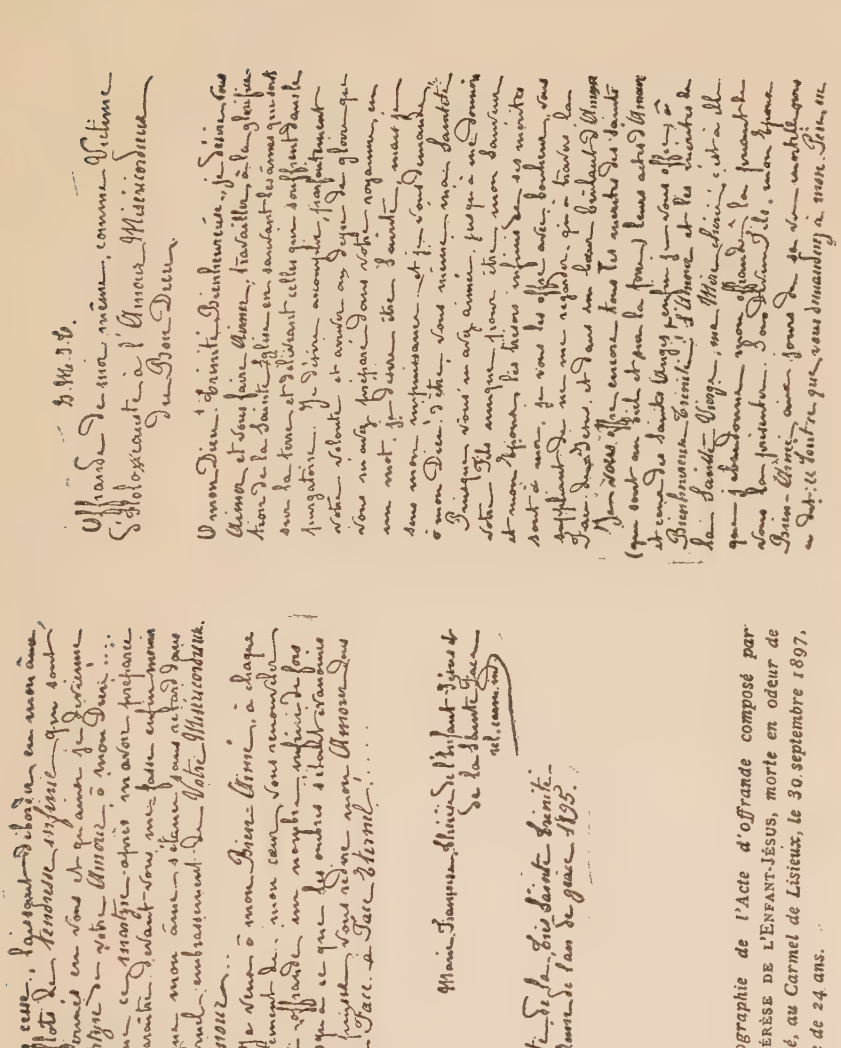
being in choir beginning the Way of the Cross, she felt herself suddenly wounded by a dart of fire so ardent that she thought she should die. Similar experiences had already previously happened to her as we have already mentioned, but this transport was of an entirely different character. The former experiences were bearable and in no way seemed to tend to the wrenching apart of soul and body—but in the present case she explained that no words could convey any idea, or could suggest any comparison to express the intensity of the flame. It was as though an invisible force had plunged her wholly into fire. At any moment, had it persisted, she expected to see the ties that bound her to earth give way; but withal, with the intensity of the flame, her soul was also penetrated with sweetness. The next moment she felt herself on earth once more and dryness had returned to her heart. It is true for the moment the Divine Hand had withdrawn the fiery dart, but the wound was to death —it was the beginning of the end.

By permission of the Carmel Lisieux

LISIEUX

THERESA'S ROOM AT "LES BUISSONNETS" NOW A CHAPEL
X HEAD OF THERESA'S BED WAS HERE

"Finding help nowhere on earth and at the point of death from my sufferings, I turned to my heavenly Mother begging her with all my heart to take pity on me. All of a sudden the statue seemed to come to life . . . with a gracious smile for me."



Autographie de l'Acte d'offrande composé par Sr THÉRÈSE DE L'ENFANT-JÉSUS, morte en odeur de sainteté, au Carmel de Lisieux, le 30 septembre 1897, à l'âge de 24 ans.

Facsimile of a portion of the original Autograph Act of Consecration of herself to the Merciful Love of God made by Sister Theresa of the Child Jesus on Trinity Sunday, June 9th. 1895.

CHAPTER XIV

THE DARK NIGHT OF THE SOUL

The innate generosity of Theresa's soul always impelled her when in suffering to willingly offer herself to suffer still more. This was the case in June 1888, two months after her entry as a Postulant into the Carmel. Her father had fallen a victim to a first stroke of paralysis, and another was feared, yet Theresa surprised her Novice Mistress by saying—" I am suffering a great deal, Mother, yet I feel I can suffer still more." She comments on this that she did not then foresee the trial awaiting her, nor that on February 12th. 1889, a month after her clothing day, her beloved father would drink so deeply of such a bitter chalice. When the blow fell she no longer said she could suffer more—words could not express her grief nor could she ever trust herself to put her feelings into words.

Similarly, when in June 1895, she became so penetrated with the feeling of how the Divine Love of the Creator was neglected and rejected by His own creatures, she offered herself up once more, not merely as a victim, but a holocaust. God took her at her word and flooded her soul for the time being with sweetness, but merely in order to strengthen her for the supreme ordeal she was to go through in union with our divine Lord as a willing victim of love.

She already knew this clearly, for it was an old saying of hers—that to dedicate oneself as a victim of love is not to be dedicated to sweetness and consolations—it is to offer oneself to all that is painful and bitter, because love lives only by *sacrifice*—and the more we surrender ourselves to love the more we surrender ourselves to *suffering*. As we have seen suffering in one shape or form was no new experience for her. Even spiritual trials had been her daily bread ever since she entered the Carmel.

Even as a postulant and novice her soul had for its daily food the bread of spiritual dryness. Later, in the very midst of the grievous trial of her father's malady she had to chronicle

"though my sufferings seemed to have reached their height, my desire for suffering in no way abated. Soon my *soul* also had to bear its burden of trials as well as my heart. My dryness of soul increased to such a degree that I could find comfort neither in heaven nor on earth; yet in the midst of these waters of tribulation, that I had so thirsted for, I was the happiest of living beings."

Similarly in approaching the experiences of this closing stage of her life's pilgrimage, she prepares her Mother Prioress for the full disclosure by reminding her of her lifelong experience of sorrow. "My soul has made acquaintance with trials of all kinds; I have truly suffered much here below. In my childhood I was afflicted with sadness—now that it is in peace and joy I have to taste bitterness of all kinds. I must admit that but for your knowing me through and through, dear Mother, you would smile in reading these pages, for never has a soul seemed less tried than mine. But were the martyrdom I have gone through during the past year made manifest to all, how astonished everyone would be! Now since it is your wish I should do so, I shall try to set it all down in writing, but words cannot be found to correspond to these experiences, and anything I shall say must needs always fall short of the reality."

This account was written in the early part of the year 1897, and refers to the entire deprivation of all sensible hope or consolation experienced by her shortly after receiving the first warning of her approaching end. This warning came in the shape of a sudden haemorrhage which occurred in the early hours of Good Friday morning, 1896.

As already intimated, the strain of the mysterious rapture that so soon followed the oblation of herself to the Divine Mercy, made by Theresa on June 9th. 1895, was in all human probability a wound unto death. Though it just missed snapping the bonds that bound soul to body, it is quite permissible to conclude that the natural powers of resistance of the body were so undermined by the strain, that it fell an easy prey to the first chance infection it encountered. In spite of all she had gone through, Theresa, physically speaking, was endowed with a healthy and sturdy constitution, authentic portraits of her showing that she was far from being a weakling. No human frame, however, can long resist such preternatural strain, and through her constant contact with the youthful novices and postulants, phthisis being more

prevalent amongst the young in France than in England, Theresa was not unlikely to be soon exposed to the germs of the malady that was destined to be the minister of God's love, in finally uniting Him to His faithful and ever expectant spouse.

The fact that a *focus* of infection was sufficiently advanced in the spring of 1896 to cause haemorrhage, evidently points to a first obscure onset of the malady some time possibly in the summer or autumn of 1895, following therefore very closely on the rapture of the summer of the same year.

In this same autumn of 1895 a lifelong wish of Theresa's heart was gratified. With her lively faith in our Lord's eternal priesthood she had always grieved over the deaths of her two baby brothers. Time after time she pictured the joy it would have been to her had they become priests, to feel day by day they were remembering her specially in the Holy Sacrifice, and to have letters from them telling her of their labours for souls, and begging her prayers for the blessing of God on their work. Even in this as with what she calls her childish wishes, her yearning was gratified. Towards the end, as we shall see later, her consuming love of God could brook no limits to her thirst to serve Him in every possible way. She not only yearned to be a martyr of Christ, but also to make Him known to all men. It was not sufficient she felt to be a daughter of Carmel, a spouse of Jesus, and so a mother of souls. Even when as practically a schoolgirl she entered the convent, she stated in her formal petition for reception, that she wished to be a Carmelite in order "*to pray for priests.*" Now as the end approached and time seemed short, she felt all vocations calling her, and chafed at her inability to fulfil them all. "I feel within myself the vocation to be a warrior, a priest, an apostle, a doctor of the Church, a martyr. . . . I would like to accomplish deeds of heroism—I feel within myself the courage of a crusader, and I long to die on the field of battle in defence of the Church. The vocation of a priest, too! With what love, my Jesus, would I have borne Thee in my hands when my voice had called Thee down from heaven! With what love I would have given Thee to souls! And yet, while longing to be a priest, I admire and envy the humility of St. Francis of Assisi, and I feel drawn also to imitate him in his vocation of refusing the sublime dignity of the priesthood. How then can I reconcile these conflicting wishes? Like the prophets and doctors I am drawn to enlighten souls.

Were it possible I would penetrate into every corner of the earth to preach Thy name, O my Beloved, to raise on heathen soil the glorious standard of Thy Cross! But one mission alone could not satisfy me. I would wish to preach the Gospel in all parts of the world simultaneously, not missing out even the most remote islands. I would wish to be a missionary, not merely for a number of years, but were it possible starting from the beginning of the world and continuing my work till the consummation of time. Above all I yearn for the martyr's crown. It was the dream of my childhood's days, and the desire has come to maturity and waxed strong within me as I have grown up in my little cell in the Carmel. But here too is fresh foolishness since I do not sigh for one kind of torture only; to be satisfied I would want them all. Like Thee, O adorable Spouse, I would be scourged, I would be crucified. I would wish to be flayed like St. Bartholomew, plunged into boiling oil like St. John, or like St. Ignatius of Antioch ground by the teeth of wild beasts into a bread worthy of God. With St Agnes and St. Cecilia I would wish to offer my neck to the sword of the executioner, and like Joan of Arc, I would murmur the name of Jesus at the stake." . . . . "And yet precisely because of my weakness Thou hast been pleased to gratify my little child-like wishes, and to-day it is Thy good pleasure to realise those other desires of mine, vaster than the universe. Thus, these aspirations having become a veritable martyrdom for me, I opened one day the Epistles of St. Paul with the thought of seeking some relief in my sufferings. My eyes fell on the 12th. and 13th. Chapters of his First Epistle to the Corinthians. Therein I read that all cannot become apostles, prophets and doctors; that the Church is made up of different members; that the eye cannot be also the hand. The answer was clear but it did not gratify my desires or give me the peace I sought. 'Then descending into the depths of my own nothingness' (as St. John of the Cross says) 'I raised myself up so high that I was able to reach my mark.' Without being discouraged I read on, and this lesson consoled me: 'Be zealous for the better gifts: and I show you a yet more excellent way.' (I. Cor. xii. 31). The Apostle then explains how all gifts, even the most perfect have no value without *love;* that Charity is the most excellent way of surely going to God. Then at last I found rest and content! Meditating on the mystical body of Holy Church, I could not recognise myself amongst any of its

members as enumerated by St. Paul, or was it not rather I wished to identify myself with them all? Charity gave me the clue to my vocation. I understood that since the Church is a body composed of different members, the noblest and most important of all the organs would not be wanting. I realised that the Church has a heart, that this heart burns with love, and that it is love alone which imparts energy to its members. I know that if this love were extinguished, the Apostles would no longer preach the Gospel and the martyrs would refuse to shed their blood. I understood that love includes all vocations, that it is everything, and that it stretches out through all time, and through all space, because it is eternal."

"Then, beside myself with joy, I cried out: 'O Jesus, my Love, at last I have found my vocation. *My vocation is love!* Yes, I have found my place in the bosom of the Church, and this place, O my God, thou hast Thyself given to me: in the heart of the Church my Mother, *I will be love!* . . . Thus I shall be all things; thus will my dream be realised.' Why do I speak of rapturous joy? This expression is not accurate. Rather is it peace which has become my portion—the calm settled peace of the sailor when he catches sight of the beacon which lights the entrance to the port." . . . "To love Thee, Jesus, is now my only thought. Glorious deeds are not for me. I cannot preach the Gospel or shed my blood. What matters it? My brothers work in my stead, and I, little child as I am—I stay close to the throne, and love Thee for all who are in the strife."

"But how shall I show my love since love proves itself by deeds? *Well, the little child will strew flowers* . . . she will perfume the divine throne with their fragrance, she will sing love's canticle in silvery tones. Yea, my Beloved, it is thus my short life shall be spent in Thy sight. The only way I have of proving my love is to strew flowers before Thee—that is to say, *I will never let pass any tiny sacrifice, any look, any word. I wish to profit by the smallest actions and to do them all for love.* I wish to suffer in loving, and in loving even to rejoice: thus shall I strew the flowers. Not one shall I ever come across without scattering its petals before Thee. . . . and then I will sing . . . . I will sing always even if my roses must be gathered from amidst thorns; and the longer and sharper the thorns, the sweeter shall be my song."

Though she had such a marked contemplative vocation, yet the strong, keen, active mind, consumed with the love of our Lord, at times felt impelled to be out and doing, wherever the conflict was fiercest, instead of being caged within the convent walls. Then came the illumination that love of God joined with prayer and intercession are integral parts of the Church's work: that the contemplative vocation includes all others. Nevertheless, in order that one more wish of His little spouse might be gratified even in this life, on the feast of St. Theresa, 1895, her sister Pauline (Mother Agnes of Jesus), who was then Prioress, received a letter from a Seminarist in a missionary college, saying that he had been inspired by St. Theresa to ask for a Sister who would devote herself especially to his salvation and the salvation of his future flock. He promised always to remember this spiritual sister when saying Mass. To Theresa's intense delight she was chosen to correspond with him and some of her very last letters on earth are addressed to him and show how later when he was ordained Theresa was able to know of and enter into all the joys and disappointments of a zealous missionary's work for souls just as though she at last had a brother ordained a priest. This joy, as we have seen, came during the last short season of respite before her final trial began. The unlooked for fulfilment of her desire of having a priest brother who would tell her of his labours and trials, re-awakened for a while in her heart the joys of her childhood's days when pleasures were so keen that her heart seemed too small to contain them. Years, she says pathetically, had passed since she had tasted a like happiness, so fresh, so unfamiliar, as if forgotten chords had been stirred within her.

Later, as if to fulfil all her early wishes to the very letter, Mother Mary Gonzaga, who again was Prioress in May, 1896, placed Theresa under obedience to write to another young priest as well as to the former, telling her that obedience would double, not halve, the value of the work she was doing for them both—so now before she left the earth, she who had suffered so much through losses and separations, found herself already beginning to reap the hundredfold reward with her two priest brothers and all her little sisters the novices, in whose destinies she was interested and of whose trials and struggles she was ever the willing confidant. With her ties to this new spiritual family, she was saved from being thrown back too much on herself, and

thenceforth in all her prayers she ever made special remembrance of those whom she looked upon as having been given to her by our Blessed Lord Himself.

These were the last gleams of earthly happiness for her. Soon the shadows began to settle down, first on the body, and then even on her soul—shadows that would only be dissipated by the dawning of the eternal day. She was now approaching the beginning of her last year on earth.

The first distant signs of the end appeared in Holy Week, 1896. Theresa had kept Lent this year quite strictly, and possibly owing to the last efforts of resistance the system was making to the insidious early inroads of phthisis, she experienced a feeling of *bien être* she noticed at the time as unusual. She had even wished on Maundy Thursday to spend the whole night watching before the Altar of Repose, but as it was thought better she should not overstrain herself, she returned to her cell at midnight. She had scarcely got into bed before she felt a hot stream rise to her lips. Her lamp being already extinguished, she, as a seasoned religious was able, as by second nature, though she suspected the cause, to repress her curiosity, and went peacefully to sleep. In the the morning to her delight, she saw her prevision had come true on finding her handkerchief soaked with blood. She was convinced that on this anniversary of His death her Beloved had allowed her "to hear His first call, like a sweet, distant murmur heralding His joyful approach."

After Prime and Chapter she hastened to cast herself at the feet of the Mother Prioress to tell her of her happiness. Feeling no pain, she easily obtained permission to finish Lent as she had begun it, and she shared in all the special austerities of the Carmel for Good Friday without any relaxation. She was full of the thought of soon entering heaven, and was transported with joy. The same evening of Good Friday the haemorrhage recurred. Theresa was still more elated at this, as she feared the first might have been only some chance accident. Full of confidence in the good things laid up for those who are faithful, she felt such a clear and lively faith that the thought of heaven was her sole delight. She could not believe it possible for men to be utterly devoid of faith and she was convinced that those who deny the existence of another world really lie in their hearts.

Having led a sheltered life, preserved from the society of

LISIEUX

BENEDICTINE ABBEY: THE SCHOOL DORMITORY

X THERESA'S LITTLE COT

"During the retreat for my First Communion I became a boarder . . . Every night the First Mistress came with her little lamp and softly drawing aside the curtains of my bed, kissed me tenderly on my forehead."

unbelievers, with her mind untarnished by books and arguments against faith, Theresa, though she had led a life of constant dryness, had yet always felt the firmest of convictions as to the unquestioned reality of the supernatural and of the historical teachings of faith.

As the special apostle of God's love in these latter days it was necessary for the fulness of her perfection as well as for the efficacy of her mission that she should, while sustained by God, descend and sound the very depths of the mysterious and widespread unbelief that seems a sort of spiritual pestilence in these days of unrest. Day by day science seems to be throwing fresh light on the mysterious kinship of all human beings, and especially of those who live in organised communities. These researches will, in all probability, ultimately throw much light on the mysteries of the Mystical Body of Christ and the Communion of Saints. Looked at in this light Theresa seems almost a victim of expiation for the faithlessness and apostasy of so many of her fellow-countrymen who, living in a land so highly favoured by God, have yet turned away from the teachings of faith.

This last crowning mysterious trial of Theresa also did its work in putting the finishing touches to the resemblance between herself and her divine Spouse, especially as her constant prayer had ever been that she should die like He did, a death of desolation.

For the moment however, Theresa's mind, was occupied only with the nearness of heaven, and having been present at peaceful and painless deaths, very likely thought the end might come to her swiftly and painlessly from some sudden heart failure.

By slow stages during the following Paschal days her mood of ecstatic exaltation at the thought of the near approach of heaven began to be quenched. By subtle suggestions our divine Lord began to infuse into her soul knowledge of the fact that there really are in truth souls bereft of faith and hope—souls who through abuse of grace have lost these precious treasures, the only source of pure and lasting joy. Then came experimental knowledge of this terrible state. Our Lord allowed her soul to be overwhelmed with darkness, and the thought of heaven which had ever been her consolation from her earliest childhood, now became the subject of temptations to doubt, bringing in their train conflict and torture. These were never to leave her: assailed by them, yet sustained by the grace of blind faith, she persevered heroically to the end and

by that same light, steered her little barque safely into the harbour of eternal salvation. Her trial was so mysterious, her doubt so dark, and her desolation so extreme, that she frankly says it is beyond her power to explain what she went through. She can only make use of a feeble comparison to illustrate it by imagining the plight of certain of the human race who, living in a land of perpetual fogs and mist, would find it difficult to believe there are lands where bright sunshine is a common occurrence.

She also too seemed clearly to apprehend that this suffering was being endured by her as an expiation for the unfaithful of her own race, who, being once enlightened, have rejected the light, and now sit in darkness—" Dear Lord," she cries, " Thy child has understood Thou art the light divine : she asks Thy pardon for her unbelieving brethren, and is willing to eat the bread of sorrow as long as Thou mayest wish. For love of Thee she will sit at the table of bitterness where these poor sinners take their food, and she will not stir from it until Thou givest the sign. But may she not say in her own name and the name of her guilty brethren : ' O God be merciful to us sinners ' ? Send us away justified. May all those on whom Faith does not shine see the light at last. O my God, if that table which they profane can be purified by one that loves Thee, I am willing to remain there alone to eat the bread of tears, until it shall please Thee to bring me to Thy Kingdom of light ; the only favour I ask is that I may never offend Thee again."

" I have told you, dear Mother, that from the time of my childhood I felt gifted with the feeling of certainty that one day I should manage to get away from this my land of darkness. I believed it, not only because I had been told so by others, but also because I felt down in the depths of my heart, by reason of deep longings that I felt part of my very self, that there was in store for me another and more beautiful country, one that would be my abiding dwelling place, much the same as the genius of Christopher Columbus gave him the intuition of a new world. But suddenly the mists that were about me, penetrated into my very soul, and have enveloped me in such fashion that I cannot even recall to my mind the consoling image of my own land . . . all has faded away. When, too, I would wish to give some rest to my heart weary of the surrounding darkness by recalling encouraging thoughts of a life to come, my anguish increases. It seems to me

that these dark shadows, taking on the voice and tones of the demons, jeer at me saying: 'You dream of the light of a land of fragrance; you dream of making your own for ever the possession of the Creator of these wonders; you think one day to escape from these mists where you languish. Begone, begone—Nay, rejoice in death, which will give you, not what you hope for, but a night darker still, the night of utter nothingness!' "

"Dear mother, this description of my trial is as inadequate compared with the reality, as the first rough outline is from the model; but I cannot bring myself to write more; I fear to blaspheme. . . . . Even now I fear I may have said too much. May God forgive me! He knows well that though I have none of the consolations of faith, I strain every nerve to do what it teaches. I have made more Acts of Faith in this last year than during all the rest of my life."

"Each time that the enemy would provoke me to a fresh combat, I behave as a gallant soldier. Knowing that a duel is an act of cowardice, without ever looking him in the face, I turn my back upon the foe; then I hasten to my beloved Jesus, and vow that I am ready to shed my blood in witness of my belief in heaven. I tell Him if only He will deign to open heaven to poor unbelievers, I am quite content to give up even the power of picturing with the eyes of my soul the heaven that awaits me. Also in spite of this trial which robs me of comfort, I still can say: 'Thou hast given me, O Lord, delight in all Thou dost.' (Ps. xci. 5). For what joy can be greater than to suffer for Thy love? The greater the suffering and the less it appears before men, the greater the pleasure it gives Thee, O my God. . . . . Even if, by an impossibility, Thou shouldst not deign to heed my sufferings, I should be still happy to bear them, in the hope that my tears might, perhaps, prevent or atone for even one sin against faith."

"No doubt, dear Mother, you will think I exaggerate somewhat *the night of my soul.* If you judge by the poems I have composed this year, it must seem as though I have been flooded with consolations, like a child for whom the veil of faith is almost rent asunder. And yet it is no longer a veil—it is a wall which rises up to the very heavens, and shuts out the starry sky."

"When I sing of the happiness of heaven and the eternal possession of God, I do not feel great joy therein, for I sing only

of what *I wish to believe.* Sometimes, I confess, just a little ray of sunshine enlightens my dark night, and I enjoy peace for an instant, but later, the remembrance of this ray of light, instead of consoling me, makes the darkness thicker still."

"And yet never have I felt so clearly how sweet and merciful is the Lord. He has laid His heavy cross on me just at the very time when I was able to bear it; had it come earlier I fear it might have disheartened me. Now all it does is only this—it takes away from me a feeling of natural satisfaction I might feel in my longing for heaven."

These searching trials also had their effect in still more refining and spiritualising all her aims and desires. The suggestion was made that should she get better, she should be sent to China to reinforce a Carmelite community in that remote land. Though it meant leaving the home of her childhood, her beloved France, and her sisters, and going to a convent where she would be unknown, she willingly accepted exile. As a matter of fact it soon became unthinkable, but yet so long as it was thought possible, Theresa, by an act of her will, had made her sacrifice. Next it was suggested two of her own sisters should go to Saigon, also in French Cochin-China, a foundation from Lisieux, but though her heart ached, she would not say a word to hold them back. Our Lord again accepted her good will as being sufficient, and she remained with them to the end

Another result of the martyrdom of doubt and anxiety she was continually enduring was increased light on the law of charity towards our neighbour. As is the case with those who have few temptations in the service of God, Theresa in her earlier years was at times tempted to observe, and perhaps criticise the slight failings or imperfections of those with whom she lived. This season of continual disquiet and doubt, had its use in bringing home to her the possibility that those whom she had blamed so lightly for trifles, had perhaps all the time been enduring some agonizing load of anxiety, and were really making heroic efforts to fulfil the simplest duties. Realising this, a new fount of tenderness for her poor afflicted Sisters welled up in Theresa's heart, and she seemed to see in quite a new light that the duty of the love of our neighbour is most closely bound up with the love of God, and that it is our duty to endeavour to love our struggling neighbour, with something of the same intense compassionate love that wells up for him from the infinite depths of our Lord's Sacred Heart.

Viewed in this light she saw imperfection even in the former tender and spiritual love she gave her Sisters in religion. She seemed to feel she had not loved them as our Lord loves them, and she realised more clearly that true charity consists in bearing all our neighbours' defects—not being surprised at their weaknesses, but edified at their smallest virtues. Finally she realised that charity must not remain shut up in the heart for " no man lighted a candle and putteth it in a hidden place nor under a bushel ; but upon a candlestick, that they who come in may see the light." (St. Luke xi. 33).

Thus with constant renewal of her acts of faith and redoubling of her acts of love of God by exercising it continually in loving her neighbour as though it were Jesus within her who was loving her fellow creature she strove to fight the tempest of doubt and darkness that raged in her soul. It was at its worst, beginning with Easter 1896, and continued without any intermission till the month of May of the last year but one of her life when she had a consoling dream in which she seemed to see the Venerable Mother Anne of Jesus, foundress of the Carmel in France. Theresa made bold to ask the question—" Dear Mother, I entreat you tell me, will our Lord leave me much longer in this world ? Will He not soon come to fetch me ? " And the answer was—" Yes, soon—very soon—I promise you." Once more Theresa in her distress strove for reassurement, just as in her baby days, she nightly wished to be assured of her sisters' approval. " Dear Mother," she asked again—" tell me if He does not want more from me than these poor little acts and desires I offer Him. Is He pleased with me ?" And the reassuring answer seemed to come—" The Good God asks no more of you. He is pleased, quite pleased." And then it seemed to her that Mother Anne of Jesus took her face in her hands and kissed her so tenderly that her heart was flooded with joy.

Then in some measure the tempest in her soul was stilled and this renewal of hope enabled her to battle through the last months of physical pain and spiritual desolation—and she expressed her gratitude saying—" O Jesus, thou didst command the winds and the sea and there came a great calm."

Thus in the midst of her sufferings she realised the littleness of the creature—that by the efforts of its own faculties and powers it can effect nothing—that there is but one act which performed

with a pure intention can transcend all the natural weakness of human nature, and more than fully atone for all indeliberate infirmities and failings. So she cried out—" O my Jesus, I love Thee. I love my mother the Church; I bear in mind, as St. John of the Cross says, that ' the least act of pure love is of more value to her than all other works put together.' But is this pure love really in my heart? Are not my boundless desires but dreams—but foolishness? If this be so, I beseech Thee to enlighten me; Thou knowest I seek but the truth. If my desires be rash, make them die away, for these desires are for me the most grievous of all martyrdoms. And yet I confess if I reach not some day those heights to which my soul aspires I yet shall have tasted, in this very martyrdom, and in this foolishness, more sweetness than I feel I could ever experience in the joys of heaven; unless by a miracle Thou takest away from me all memory of the hopes I entertained on earth. Jesus, Jesus, if the mere desire of Thy love awakens such delight, what will it be to possess it, to enjoy it for ever."

" How can a soul so imperfect as mine aspire to the plenitude of love? In what does this mystery consist? O my only Friend, why dost Thou not reserve these infinite longings for great and noble souls, for the eagles that soar to the heights? Alas, I am but a poor little unfledged bird, covered only with down. I am not an eagle, all I have are the eagle's eyes and heart. Yet, notwithstanding my exceeding littleness, I dare to gaze upon the divine Sun of love, and I burn to dart upwards unto Him! I wish to fly, if I could I would imitate the eagles; but all that I can do is to flap my little wings—it is not within my feeble power to fly. What is to become of me? Must I die of sorrow at seeing myself so helpless? Oh, no! I will not even grieve. With daring self-abandonment, there will I remain until death, my gaze fixed upon that divine Sun. . . . And *should impenetrable clouds roll up and hide the Orb of Love, and should it not seem possible for me to believe that there is any other existence beyond the darkness of this life, that would then be the hour of perfect joy, the hour in which to push my confidence to the utmost bounds.* I should not dare to move from where I am, well knowing that beyond the dark clouds the sweet Sun still shines."

" Yet shouldst Thou still be deaf to the plaintive cries of Thy feeble creature, shouldst Thou still be veiled, then I am content

to remain bedraggled in the wet, I am resigned to be benumbed with cold, and once more I rejoice in this well-deserved suffering."

"O Sun, my only Love, I am happy to feel myself so small, so frail in Thy sunshine, and my heart is at peace. . . . . I know that all the eagles of Thy heavenly court have pity on me, they guard and defend me, they put to flight the vultures—the demons that fain would devour me. I fear them not, these demons, I am not destined to be their prey—I am reserved for the divine Eagle."

"O Jesus! forgive me if I tell Thee that Thy love reacheth even unto folly. And in face of this folly, what wilt thou, but that my heart leap up to Thee? How could my trust have any limits?"

"I know that the Saints have made themselves as fools for Thy sake; being eagles they have done great things. As for me I am too little to do great things, and my folly is to hope that Thy love accepts me as a victim: my folly is to count on the aid of angels and saints in order that I may fly unto Thee with Thine own wings, O my divine Eagle! For as long as Thou willest I shall remain—my eyes fixed upon Thee. I long to be fascinated by Thy divine gaze; I would wish to become the prey of Thy love. I have the hope that Thou wilt one day swoop down upon me, and bearing me away to the source of all love, Thou wilt plunge me at last into that glowing abyss, that I may become for ever its happy victim."

"O Jesus, would that I could tell all *little souls* of Thine unspeakable condescension! I feel that if by any possibility, Thou couldst find one weaker than my own, Thou wouldst take great delight in loading her with still greater favours, *provided she abandoned herself with entire confidence to Thine infinite Mercy.* But O my Spouse, why these desires of mine to make known the secrets of Thy love? Is it not Thyself alone Who hast taught them to me, and canst Thou not unveil them to others? Yea, I know it and this I implore Thee! . . . . *I entreat Thee to let Thy divine eyes rest upon a vast number of little souls: I entreat Thee to choose in this world a legion of little victims worthy of Thy love.*"

This was Theresa's swan-song, penned in the hour of her darkest desolation. A few months more only were to elapse and in response to her prayer, the divine Eagle would at last swoop

down and bear away from this earth the cherished little Apostle of His love.

As the end approached, in addition to acute physical sufferings, the darkness closed still more upon her. During her religious life she had been preserved from any vain glory she might have experienced through taking upon herself and undergoing voluntary physical penances. Once under obedience she tried to wear a small iron cross studded with sharp points, but she was so highly organised, the pain made her fall ill, and she was forbidden to attempt any further austerities. Such a failure was, in a certain sense, a humiliation to one who aimed at being a model religious, but Theresa took it in her usual spirit of supernatural commonsense and said—" Such a trifle would not have caused me illness if God has not wished thus to make me understand that the greater austerities of the Saints are not meant for me—nor for the souls that walk in the path of *spiritual childhood*." But as all supernatural progress is only attained through suffering she was destined during these last months of her life to go through a crucifixion far more agonising than that of extreme physical pain. Like our blessed Lord, she had spent her short life doing good as she passed through the world, like Him she was forgotten and unknown during life, and now following in His footsteps she was entering on the way to Calvary. By slow relentless stages the insidious malady that had first made its presence known by the haemorrhage of Good Friday 1896, was ever sapping Theresa's health. She would at first accept no dispensations or mitigations of the Rule. The Mother Prioress also seeing her so cheerful and brave did not yet forbid her to undertake community exercises that were beyond her strength. At the end of the long day she would once more, as in her babyhood, toil up the stairs one step at a time, stopping between each step to take breath ; but now there is no calling out for sympathy as in the old days. When at last she reached her cell she would be so exhausted that it would often take her quite an hour to undress to take her rest upon the hard pallet. He cell was also away from that of the other Sisters, but though her nights were so bad, she would never consent to have one of the Sisters near her. " No," she would say, " on the contrary, I am only too glad to be in a cell away from my Sisters, that I may not be heard. I am content to suffer alone—as soon as I am pitied and loaded with attentions, my happiness leaves me."

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LISIEUX

CHAPEL OF BENEDICTINE CONVENT

Theresa made her First Communion kneeling on the step at the middle of the *grille*. "How sweet was the first embrace of Jesus! I felt I was loved and I said in return—I love Thee and I give myself to Thee for ever."

X THERESA'S SEAT IN CHAPEL

God alone knows what she went through during those long sleepless nights of pain.

Eventually it became necessary for special care to be given to her—the Mother Prioress ordered her a more strengthening diet, and the symptoms moderated for a while. Then when she expressed her willingness to go to China to the Carmel of Hanoi, were she cured, a novena was begun to the Blessed Théophane Vénard to obtain her cure, but this novena only proved the beginning of a more serious stage of her malady. Later, on June 5th. 1897, the community began a fresh novena to Our Lady of Victories, encouraged by the thought of her cure as a child that followed the novena of Masses offered for her in N. D. des Victoires, Paris, but once again the only sign received was more rapid progress of the malady.

At last, about the beginning of July 1897, her state became serious and she had to be removed to the infirmary. It was almost her last parting on this earth—she was leaving her beloved cell for the last time. Her sister, Mother Agnes of Jesus, looking forward to the days when it would be no longer her sister's cell, was more affected than Theresa. The little sufferer endeavoured to comfort her—" For consolation, little Mother, you can think how happy I am up there, and remember that much of my happiness was acquired in that little cell, for I have suffered so much there and I should have been so happy to die there." It will never be known till the last day how continual and how intense were her sufferings. It was her secret, as she always appeared bright, contented and ever joyous, though at times her sufferings were almost unbearable. Once she pointed to her bitterest medicine, which was of a bright red colour, and said—" that is the image of my life: to others it has seemed all rose colour . . . yet to me it has been full of bitterness—and yet not entirely bitter, for I have learned to find my joy and sweetness in all that is bitter."

At another time replying to her novices, who were heartbroken at seeing the sufferings of their Mistress, she said:—" Do not grieve for me. I have reached a point where I can no longer suffer, because all suffering is become so sweet." Then she gave her wonderfully wise recipe for patience—" If I did not simply live from one moment to another, it would be impossible for me to be patient; but I look only at the present—I forget the past—and I take good care not to forestall the future. When we yield

to discouragement or despair, *it is usually because we think too much about the past and the future.* But pray much for me, for it is often just when I cry to heaven for help, that I feel most abandoned." Then she revealed the wonderful character of her absolute resignation to God's will, in explaining that in order not to give way to discouragement when her sufferings were most acute, she was accustomed to turn to God and all His Saints and thank them, notwithstanding her apparent abandonment. "I believe," she added, "they want to see how far my trust may extend. But the words of Job have not entered my heart in vain: 'Although He should kill me, I will trust in Him.' I own it has taken me a long time to arrive at this degree of self-abandonment; but I have reached it now, and it is the Lord Himself who has brought me so far."

All the while her soul was enveloped in thickest darkness, and her ever present temptations against faith deprived her of any feeling of happiness at the thought of her approaching death. She herself was dismayed and at a loss to understand this crowning process of purification—"Were it not for this trial, which is impossible to understand, I think I should die of joy at the prospect of soon leaving the earth." As a matter of fact it was this mysterious trial that put the finishing touches to her sanctity, purifying her soul from the stains of the slightest faults and eliminating every trace of self-seeking from her character. The consequence was that as the end approached, she was not merely purified from sin, but was every moment making more rapid progress in her "little way of confidence and abandonment." Her words repeatedly made this clear. "I desire," she often said, "neither death nor life. Were our Lord to offer me my choice, I would not choose. I only will what He wills; it is what He does that I love. I do not fear the last struggle, nor any pains, however great, my illness may bring. God has always been my help. He has led me by the hand from my earliest childhood, and on Him I rely. My agony may reach the furthest limits, but I am convinced He will never forsake me."

Her misgivings as to the excruciating character of her closing mental sufferings were destined to be realised to the full. Like our Lord, she was to drink the chalice of suffering and drain it to the dregs. As her illness progressed she confided to her sister, Mother Agnes of Jesus, that one night she was seized with a terrible

feeling of anguish. She was, she felt, lost in the darkness, and from out of it came an accursed voice saying—" Are you certain God loves you? Has He Himself told you so? The opinion of creatures will not justify you in His sight." Later on for several days during the month of August 1897, about a month before her death, Theresa remained in a manner beside herself, and implored that prayers might be offered for her. It seemed to her she was abandoned by all. She felt herself abandoned even by our Lord Himself, as from August 16th. till September 30th. 1897, the day of her happy death, she was unable to receive Holy Communion on account of her continual sickness. She had never been seen in this state of visible distress before, and in her unspeakable anguish she could only keep on repeating—" Oh, how necessary it is to pray for the agonising! If one only knew."

On another occasion in the evening she entreated the infirmarian to sprinkle her bed with holy water, explaining—" I am besieged by the devil. I do not see him, but I feel him: he torments me and holds me with a grip of iron that I may not find a ray of comfort; he increases my agony so that I may be driven to despair—and I cannot pray. I can only look at our Blessed Lady and say 'Jesus'! How needful is the prayer of the hymn we use at Compline: 'May evil dreams and phantoms of the night be driven far from us.' Something mysterious is happening within me. I am not suffering for myself but for some other soul and the devil is angry." The infirmarian sprinkled her bed as she was asked, and also lit a blessed candle: the evil poisonous influence seemed to withdraw at once, but it made no difference to the desolation and anguish of the patient sufferer.

Quite occasionally there would come some transient rays of encouragement that flickered over the troubled waters in which her soul was plunged. Once she came on the sight of a hen mothering her little brood, and she was reminded of our Lord's most loving comparison. It occurred to her that her own experience on looking back through life bore out this teaching completely—she had never really been *entirely* abandoned—in fact she had been hidden under the shadow of His wings all her short life. It is true His Face seemed shrouded from her for a time, but it really was in mercy—and he had all through been merely looking from "behind the lattices." At another time she was so utterly bruised and buffeted by her trial, that the very heavens

held no message for her: she could only gaze at them in dumb resignation like a stricken animal. It gave her unaffected simplicity and common sense a shock to find one of the Sisters was edified at this, through being under the impression that Theresa was letting her thoughts rest on the contemplation of heaven—when, as a matter of fact, as far as feelings went, the true heaven seemed more than ever closed against her. In her trouble of mind the illumination came to her soul that after all were she only gazing at the material blue sky without any thought of heaven, yet, notwithstanding this, her gaze was really an act of love. She had never gone back on the act by which she delivered up her soul to Love entirely, so that each and every action, even the most indifferent, might be marked with the seal of love—and so from this thought for the moment a ray of pure intellectual consolation beamed across her soul.

Shortly before she had to give up receiving Holy Communion, in consequence of her illness taking a more serious turn, she received Extreme Unction on July 30th. She did not fail to receive in common with the rest of the faithful great graces of comfort and hope from the reception of this sacrament of peace. She seemed to feel it was a presage of the long desired end. "The door of my prison feels ajar," she said, "I am steeped in joy, especially since our Father Superior has assured me that to-day my soul is like that of a little child after baptism."

Her physical sufferings nevertheless, went on increasing and her spiritual desolation kept pace with her bodily suffering. The doctor himself was distressed at witnessing her extremity of pain. "If you only knew," he exclaimed, "what she has to endure! I have never seen anyone suffer so intensely and with such a look of supernatural joy. . . . I shall not be able to cure her; she was not made for this earth."

In her extremity of physical pain joined with deprivation, even of Holy Communion, it reveals much of the beauty of her soul to learn how sometimes the heavy cross was lifted for a moment by the exquisite beauty of what are looked upon as the simple works of God's Hands. One such comfort was the contemplation of the beauty of flowers, which were constantly being sent in to her by friends outside the convent. Another source of consolation was the spontaneous visits made her by a little redbreast who, flying into her cell, loved to play about her bed, and

who remained faithful in his visits to the end. In all these things she saw the loving hand of God, especially as they were the works of His own Hands—but yet such transient little joys were merely passing alleviations—" Mother," she said, " I do feel deeply the many touching proofs of God's love for me. I am laden with them —nevertheless, I continue in the deepest gloom !—I suffer much—very much ! and yet my state is one of profound peace. All my longings have been realised. . . I am full of confidence."

All through her illness she never missed any chance of exercising most heroic patience—she might be burning with fever, and parched with thirst—she never complained—she never asked for alleviation. Once in this state of extreme thirst, a hot water bottle was brought for her feet, and iodine was put on her chest. There was every prospect of her remaining thus for the whole night—but she would not ask the infirmarian for any alleviation. " My Jesus," she cried to Him, " Thy little child is so thirsty—Thou seest I am already burning and they have brought me more heat and fire—Oh, if they had brought me even half a glass of water, what a comfort it would have been ! But no, she is glad to have this opportunity of resembling Thee more closely, and thus helping Thee to save souls." The infirmarian left her, and Theresa resigned herself to passing a night of agony from thirst in addition to all her other suffering. But as so often was the case with her childlike soul, our Lord accepted the will for the deed, and in a few moments the infirmarian came back with a cooling drink, saying that the afterthought had struck her that her patient might be thirsty.

As the weeks passed her sufferings became daily more intense and her weakness in the same measure increased. She was unable to make the slightest movement without assistance. The slightest sound increased her discomfort, and the fever and oppression were so great that it was only with great difficulty she could utter a word. Yet she had a smile for all—she would never if she could help it give any of the sisters extra trouble, and until two days before her death she would never allow anyone to remain in the infirmary with her during the night. How were these long nights spent ? Sometimes the infirmarian, in spite of her entreaties, would look in during the course of the night. Theresa would be found awake, with hands joined and eyes raised to heaven. " You ought to try and go to sleep," would say the good Sister—

but the reply would be—" I cannot Sister, I am suffering too much to sleep, so I am praying "—" And what do you say to Jesus " was the infirmarian's question—" I say nothing—I only love Him."

On another occasion she said—" Oh, how good God is! Truly He must be very good to give me strength to bear all I have to suffer." Another evening she just had strength to send her Mother Prioress the following note in pencil, to keep her promise to her and let her know the state of her soul: " O my God! How good Thou art to the little victim of Thy merciful Love! Now even when Thou joinest these bodily pains to those of my soul, I cannot bring myself to say—' the anguish of death has encompassed me.' (Ps. xvii. 5). I would rather cry out in my gratitude: ' I have gone down into the valley of the shadow of death, but I fear no evil, because Thou, O Lord, art with me.' " (Ps. xxii. 4).

In reply to her " little Mother," Mother Agnes of Jesus, who asked if she were afraid of death she said—" That may easily come to pass. I do not rely on my own feelings for I know how frail I am. It will be time enough to bear that cross if it comes, meanwhile I wish to rejoice in my present happiness " (at dying). " When the chaplain asked me if I were resigned to die, I answered—' Father, I need rather to be resigned to live—I feel nothing but joy at the thought of death.' Do not be troubled, dear Mother, if I suffer much and show no happiness at the end. Did not our Lord Himself die *a Victim of Love*, and see how great was His agony! "

Notwithstanding her extremity of suffering, she still bravely carried on her work of instilling in all around her confidence in the goodness of God, and as it were to confirm her teaching, half unconsciously, she began to let fall hints as to her coming power and privileges once the day of release had dawned.

Thus in spite of her humility one day in this last autumn of her life regarding a drooping ear of corn bending under its weight, she said to the Mother Prioress—" Mother, that ear of corn is a picture of my soul: *God has loaded me with graces for myself as well as for the good of others.*" Following on this came other sayings pointing to knowledge that had been given to her, even in the midst of her uncertainty and abandonment, that she had all along been prepared for a special mission by the happenings of her life. " I have never given God aught but love, so He will

repay me in love : *after my death I shall let fall a shower of roses.*" There was also in her mind a consciousness that her life work was only just about to begin, recalling Father Faber's dictum that the longest life and largest opportunities really afford next to no scope for the soul really to show its metal. Speaking of the future life she explained to one of the Sisters that what attracted her was not the bliss of heaven so much as the extended opportunities of loving God. Love, she said, was her aim—" to love, to be loved in return, and *to come back to earth in order to secure that Love should be beloved.*"

" I feel that my mission is at last going to commence ; my mission of getting God to be loved the same as I love Him . . . to put before souls *my little way. I wish to spend my heaven in doing good upon the earth.* This is no impossibility, as from the very bosom of the beatific vision, the angels are watching over us. No, I shall take no rest until the world comes to an end—but when the angel shall have cried out ' time is no more,' then shall I take my rest, I shall at last be able to rejoice, because the number of the elect will be complete."

In view of these final confidences her Mother Prioress wished to learn definitely what she wished them to understand by her " little way." Theresa answered : " *the little way is the way of childhood of soul—the path of confidence and entire giving up of self.* I wish to point out to souls the *little means* of attaining this, that have succeeded so perfectly in my own case—to tell them there is only one thing they need do here on earth, and that is, to cast at the feet of Jesus the *flowers of little sacrifices, to win Him by caresses !* It is just in this way I have won Him myself, and it is just for this reason, I shall be made so welcome by Him." Speaking on this same subject to one of her novices she added :—" Should I be leading you into error with my little way of love, do not fear I shall leave you to follow it very long. I should appear to you soon to tell you to take a different way ; but if I do not come back, then believe in the truth of what I tell you : one can never have too much confidence in God, who is so powerful and yet so merciful ! We are given by Him just as much as we hope for." And then in reply to their question as to how they were to pray to her if they needed her aid, came the touching reply : " call me the little Theresa."

These same intimations also peep out in the last letters she

wrote on earth—those outpourings of her heart to her brother missionaries who were by now striving to win souls in spite of discouragements and suffering. To one she writes—" What really attracts me towards the heavenly country is the call of our Lord ; the hope of loving Him at last as much as ever I have wished, and also the thought that I shall be able to gain Him the love of a *multitude of souls,* who will praise Him for all eternity." And again—" Brother I am so happy to die ! Truly I am ever so happy, not because I shall at last be freed from sufferings here below : suffering joined with love is now the only thing that seems worth having in this vale of tears. My real reason in welcoming death is that I shall then be of far more help to souls that are dear to me, than I am now while on earth." And again in a letter to China—" I have every hope of not remaining without active occupation in heaven : my yearning is to still go on toiling for the Church and souls. I am pleading with God to let me do this, and I am certain He will give me what I ask. You can see that if I am now retiring so soon from the field of battle, it is not with the selfish desire of finding rest, for ever so long back suffering has been my only heaven here on earth, and I find it hard to imagine how it will be possible for me to settle down in a land where joy unmixed with any sorrow prevails everywhere. It must be that Jesus will work some sudden change in my soul, otherwise I shall not be able to endure unending bliss."

Her loving anxiety that souls should find peace and confidence in her " little way " would not allow her to admit that any soul, no matter how highly placed, should, if simple and humble be deprived of the rights of a child of God. Within a week or two of the end, one of the Sisters was telling her that at recreation there had been talk of the exceedingly grave responsibilities of those who have care of souls—at which she seemed to revive for the moment and said with emphasis—" ' To him that is little, mercy is granted.' (Wisd. vi. 7). *It is quite possible to remain little while filling the most responsible positions;* and is it not written that at the end of all things, ' the Lord will arise to save the meek and lowly ones of the earth ' ? It is not said, *to judge,* but *to save.*"

This was also the explanation of her devotion to the Blessed Théophane Vénard during the closing days of her life. She explained that his life and virtues appealed to her because all his

LISIEUX

ORATORY OF CHILDREN OF MARY, BENEDICTINE CONVENT

"Later, after leaving school, I went back for two days a week to the Convent so as to enter the Children of Mary. When the day's work was over as no one seemed to want me I used to go into the tribune of the Chapel and wait there till my father came to fetch me home."

life he had been a *little* saint and on September 6th. of the last month of her life she received quite unexpectedly a relic of him, a treasure she had long wished to have, and it remained with her to the end as her constant comfort.

Truly she needed comfort, because over and above her physical pain and interior trials, through sickness, she had been deprived of the comfort of receiving Holy Communion during the last six weeks of her life, from August 16th. till she gave up her most pure and sorely tried soul to God on September 30th. of the same year.

At length the long expected day arrived—the day of the joy of her heart, for the gentle childlike soul that faint and pursuing had at last reached her goal. It was Thursday, September 30th. 1897. The previous night, her last upon earth, had been one of sleepless agony without a single ray of consolation—nevertheless she said she had spent the night in prayer, especially begging our blessed Lady's protection. All the morning she suffered from dyspnoea. About half-past two in the afternoon she started up in bed, so intense was her distress, though for weeks previously she had not been able to move, and exclaimed—" Dear Mother, my cup is full up to the very brim—I should never have dreamt it was possible to suffer so excruciatingly. I can only attribute it to my intense desire to save souls." Later on, she added :—" Everything I have written about my desire to endure sufferings, is quite true. *I do not regret having made an oblation of myself to Love.*" These last words she kept repeating. Then in her extremity she appealed to the Mother Prioress to help her to prepare for death. The venerable Prioress encouragingly reminded her—" My child, you are quite ready to appear before God, because you have always understood the virtue of humility." Theresa herself answered with this touching confirmation—" Yes, I feel it is so ; all my life I have only striven for the truth—yes, I have understood humility of heart."

At half-past four in the afternoon, signs of the last agony began to appear. The community was summoned to join in prayers for the dying—Theresa gave them a last smile of grateful welcome, and then, holding the crucifix in her drooping hands, and given over entirely to suffering for love's sake, she faced the final struggle. The sweat lay thick upon her brow, and tremors ran through her frame ; but like the pilot within but a stone's

throw of the harbour, finding himself caught in the thick of a furious storm, in no way loses his nerve, so this soul that had always lived by faith, seeing close at hand the beacon light of the eternal shore, threw her whole soul into the last efforts to make the port.

As the Convent bells rang out the Angelus she gazed lovingly at the long-loved statue of our blessed Lady that had followed her from her home to the Convent, and had now been carried to the infirmary. No doubt there came to her mind the words of the very last hymn to her heavenly Mother, which she had lately written with the needs of this last hour before her mind—" Thou who didst come to smile on me in the morning of my life, come once more to smile on me O Mother, now that it is eventide."

A few minutes after seven o'clock, being still racked in agony, the poor little sufferer turned to the Mother Prioress asking—" Dear Mother, am I not yet in my agony—am I not really dying ?" " Yes, my child," was the answer, " it is the agony, but perhaps Jesus wishes it should still last some hours." As had been so often the case of late, the patient little sufferer, once more made her act of perfect resignation—" Oh, very well, then—I am quite willing—I would not wish to suffer less," and with a loving glance at her crucifix, she added—" Oh ! I love Him—My God—I—love—Thee ! "

These were destined to be her last words. Hardly had she uttered them but, to the surprise of those present, she sank down quite suddenly, her head falling to her right side, in the attitude of the virgin martyrs offering themselves to the stroke of the sword.

After a few moments in this position, she raised herself up once more as if in response to some mysterious voice, but this time her eyes were wide open, and shining with heavenly peace and ineffable joy, she gazed up fixedly at some object just a little above the statue of our blessed Lady. She remained in this state of ecstasy for about the length of time it would take to recite the Creed, and then her blessed soul, having become the prey of the heavenly Eagle, fled to heaven.

A few days before her death she had said—" The death of love I desire so much, is the death of Jesus on the Cross." Her prayer was heard to the full ; darkness and anguish were the portion of her agony—yet in spite of all this suffering, her death just

as much as her life ever was, seems typical of souls consumed by the fire of divine love, judging by the description given by St. John of the Cross, who tells us—" Such souls die in wonderful raptures and thrilling transports due to love, like the swan whose song is sweetest as death approaches. This is what was in David's mind when he said—' Precious in the sight of God is the death of His Saints,' (Ps. xxv. 15), for then it is that the flood of divine love bursts forth from their souls, and precipitates itself into the ocean of divine love."

After her death the rapturous smile of her last moments still remained on her face, and never left it : a fresh palm branch was placed in her hand and the lilies and roses strewn round her were symbolic of her who carried to heaven the white robe of her baptism not only unstained by sin, but empurpled by the blood of her martyrdom of love. She was buried on the feast of St. Francis, October 4th. 1897. She still lies in the soil of her beloved France, the symbolic grain of wheat that must first die before it bringeth forth fruit. Who shall tell how many rich sheaves shall yet come to harvest from this sowing ? " Amen, amen, I say to you, unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, itself remaineth alone. But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." (John xii. 24, 25).

THE MESSENGER of the Little Flower

Vol. I. No. 1. January, 1914.

AN ANNIVERSARY

"En quadragesimus annus est."—(Deut. viii. 4.)
January 2nd. 1914.

To-day, had Our Lord spared the earth her gracious presence, Marie-Françoise-Thérèse Martin would have been keeping the 40th. anniversary of her first birthday. Sixteen years have now gone by since God called her to Himself—sixteen long, weary years for those who knew and loved her in life, but yet full of consolation as well, seeing that day by day her dying promises came true, and signs and tokens were multiplied of her living abiding interest in the children of God, wherever found on the earth. So wonderful, so palpable almost, have these evidences become that at a time when faith seems dying out, and men seem to reckon only with what they can see and feel, nevertheless, from behind the veil, there looms upon the world the personality of the once humble little Sister Theresa of Lisieux as one of the great outstanding influences of these latter days.

To-day, had she lived, she would have been forty-one! Truly she is one more instance of the words of the wise man: "Consummatus in brevi explevit tempora multa."—"Being made perfect in a short space, he fulfilled a long time." (Wisd. iv. 13.) Sixteen years ago she attained the fulness of merit—she had corresponded to the graces given to her—the end of her probation had come. A careless observer would have said the end of her short, ineffective, undistinguished life had come prematurely; had she

lived, he would have said, she might have done some good work entitling her to be remembered in the domestic chronicles of her Order as a good administrator, or a wise counsellor, or as even the pioneer of some new foundation. We at least know better now—and can see for ourselves that "the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God." (1 Cor. iii. 19).

How much we have gained by her having been made perfect in a little while, and going to her reward sixteen years ago. Had she lived it is true she would have gone on acquiring merit in the sight of God by years of faithful observance, but we should have been the poorer for her continued presence on earth. In those last days of 1897 she went through the valley of the shadow of death like her Divine Spouse, but had she lived on till now she could never have been "la petite Thérèse," "la petite soeur de l'enfant Jésus," "la petite reine," "the Little Flower," rightful mistress of all the loving, winsome titles that have won for her the hearts of young and old, because they sum up and make manifest the loveable childlike innocence and abandonment of her fresh, undimmed youth. The Saints even, who live on, labour, and suffer, have to bear, in addition, for a time the loss of this bloom and freshness of youth—the tragedy of middle age—and to bear with this deprivation till the restoration of all things in Christ, Who has said: "Behold, I make all things new"; but not so "la petite Thérèse." She always will have her place in "the Dance of the Angels"—ever one of the band of playmates of the Child Jesus—the little sister of the Innocents, the companion of Agnes and Lucy, and our own Saxon St. Edith, to whose eyes Jesus never grows old, but remains always the Child of Bethlehem, Heliopolis and Nazareth, because they are virgins and they follow the Lamb wheresoever He goeth. (Apoc. xiv. 4.)

In commencing this little publication giving accounts of the life of Sister Theresa of Lisieux, and of other similar recent cases of what seems genuine sanctity, we foresee objection may well be made that such examples are not those of canonised saints: but those to whom this difficulty may occur cannot but realise that in cases of canonisation, the Church always requires before the introduction of a Cause that petitions should be widely submitted

to the Holy See by all classes of the Christian people, including bishops, princes, great nobles and religious communities, begging it to move in the matter. This widespread interest, it is needless to say, is always brought about by spreading abroad and publishing the great things God has done for his servants, and accounts of the Processes of most of our modern saints will show that especially in the case of those who were members of religious Institutes, the Church has always regarded favourably the practice of giving accounts of the lives and virtues of those who have died in the odour of sanctity, due regard being had to the wise regulations of the Church on this point, every care being taken not to anticipate the judgment of the Church by any unauthorised "cultus."

This laudable custom of making known the virtues of those who are credibly believed to have led lives of heroic sanctity has always been a source of great edification and encouragement to the people of God. It is all the more welcome in these days of waning faith, with its attendant discouragement. Canonised saints, after the long years of examination of their Process, by the time they are raised to the altars of the Church, have become strangely remote to a subsequent generation, living under new conditions. They must inevitably seem to be shrouded in the unreality of all historic personages—but it is vastly different when we read of ecstatic love of our Divine Lord, the generous self-sacrifice of heroic virtue in one of our own time, when even those who watched over and were the guides of her first steps in virtue are still with us, who can tell us of her first faltering efforts in the war against self, of her failures, and of the steady persevering efforts that at last brought the human will into complete accord with the divine.

We see all this exemplified in the recent case of Sister Theresa of Lisieux. Born in 1873, and so had she lived younger than many now alive, she ran her short course, being made perfect in a short while, and at the early age of 24, died the death of the just, on September 30th. 1897. She was no departure from the rule of sanctity laid down by our Lord, that it is by trouble and violence only the kingdom of heaven is gained. In spite of failure, constant aridity and discouragement, she trod the way of the Cross, follow-

ing, as Father Faber so beautifully says, the footsteps of the saints, placing her feet one by one in their footprints until she, in her turn, attained the goal. Some have thoughtlessly spoken of Sister Theresa as the teacher of an entirely *new way* to God, but her way was new neither in substance nor manner—but simply and solely the old, old way of self-denial and generous love of our Divine Master, blended with an engaging, guileless spontaneousness and simplicity that has gained the hearts of all and that unlocks for us the meaning of our Blessed Lord's words: "Unless ye become as little children ye cannot enter the kingdom of heaven" (St. Matt. xviii. 3.) What however seems new about her teaching and example is that in the midst of a proud and self-sufficing age, that engrossed with human achievement strives by every earthly precaution to all but render itself independent of divine Providence, she has recalled to the minds of men the need of absolute dependence upon God and His grace.

Glorying in the grace of God that has done such great things in her, she warns us against the specious temptations to mere natural activity and moral perfection that are snares to so many in these days of unrest, and lays stress on childlike love of God, manifested by little sacrifices joined with acts of love and humility as being the sure path in the service of God.

Our mention of Father Faber, perhaps the greatest mystical writer of the nineteenth century, suggests the interesting question as to whether Sister Theresa of Lisieux was unconsciously his spiritual disciple—a question that is all the more interesting as amongst her first devout clients in England are Fathers of that same London Oratory that Father Faber founded. As we draw away from the nineteenth century and begin to see the Oxford movement in its true perspective, the figure of Faber begins to stand out apart from his contemporaries as God's great gift to the Church, not only in England, but throughout the whole world. It is hard for us now to realise that one who had been an Anglican clergyman, while still yet in his thirties had already developed into the greatest spiritual and mystical teacher of the century, his writings being an epitome of the whole of Catholic mystical and ascetical theology—and so entirely free from any tinge of his former Protestantism, that he finds himself obliged to defend his ultra-Catholicism against the somewhat insular type of Catholicity

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IN SIGHT OF PORT

"Magister adest et vocat te." (Joan xi. 28)

then prevalent, which he spoke of as the "mezzo-protestante freddezza."

Faber was born in 1814; he became a Catholic in 1845 when he was 31 years of age, being at the time Vicar of Elton, near Peterborough. In 1853 he wrote "All for Jesus," at the age of 39, a work that his biographer tells us "was criticised by some as making the way to heaven too easy," though it taught strongly the necessity of penance and even bodily austerities. (Quite an anticipation of the criticisms on Sister Theresa.) Translations of this, the best known of his works appeared almost immediately in French, German, Polish, Italian, Flemish and Spanish. "Growth in Holiness," perhaps the deepest of his books, appeared within a year, in 1854. Next came the "Blessed Sacrament," in 1855, and during the same year we learn his monumental work, "The Creator and the Creature" was written in the autumn, at St. Mary's, Sydenham. Of this latter work he says:—"It stands to the author's other works in the relation of source and origin. It has been this view of God, pondered for years, that has given rise to the theological bias visible in the other books as well as to the opinions expressed on the spiritual life."

When, therefore, we turn to the writings of Sister Theresa of Lisieux, and we find that same view of Faber the foundation of her spiritual life, so markedly so that much she says seems almost an unconscious echo of Faber's own words, we are led to wonder whether it may not be that Faber's work was not confined to his own generation, but that it is given to him to be the guide and teacher of that recent generation of saints who seem to have imbibed his spirit and who seem too in an unbelieving age to be bringing back the glories of the first ages of the Church. Who that lights on Sister Theresa's favourite words:—"It is for the love of His creature that the Creator of the universe pleads: He is all athirst for love," but would say they were a quotation from "The Creator and the Creature"; and this is not a solitary instance.

There are other coincidences too that seem not without significance. Faber died in September, 1863, a man young in years, he was only 49, but "consummatus in brevi." M. and Mme.

Martin were already beginning to rear their little family, having been married in 1858, while Faber was writing "The Foot of the Cross," and his book of "Stories of the Angels." Ten years later Theresa was born in 1873, on this 2nd. of January. Twenty-four years later Theresa also gave up her pure soul to God on the actual anniversary to the very day (September 30th.) that Faber was laid to rest in the little cemetery on the side of Sydenham Hill, looking out over his beloved Kent, the garden of England, the special home of our English saints.

The past year has been a year of triumph and jubilee for both these chosen souls, in whom we seem to trace a spiritual family likeness. On September 30th. of last year (1913)—Sister Theresa's own anniversary—at the London Oratory was kept for the 50th. time the jubilee "Dies anniversarius depositionis" of Father Faber, with a solemn Requiem Mass as was fitting, but as a scarcely disguised day of joy—while Sister Theresa has celebrated her triumph, her *annus quadragesimus,* by the Introduction of her Cause accompanied by the extraordinary spread of confidence in her intercession as shown by the phenomenal demand for the "Shower of Roses," published in 1913, which has increased to such an extent that in response to numerous demands for a regular publication we venture to offer the present little periodical to our readers.

THE NEW PORTRAIT OF SISTER THERESA OF THE CHILD JESUS.

Our readers will be interested in the following short article which appeared in " La Croix de Paris," giving its impressions of the latest portrait of Sister Theresa, which we have very great pleasure in reproducing as the frontispiece of this our first number.

Judging by the numerous letters which we publish week by week expressing the gratitude of the writers to Sister Theresa for graces received, our readers can gauge how literally this holy Carmelite nun has kept her promise of letting fall from heaven a " Shower of Roses on earth."

We, therefore, feel confident of giving pleasure to our readers by reproducing this new portrait of Sister Theresa, the artist being none other than Celine, one of the sisters of the wonder-worker, like her, a religious of the Carmelite Convent of Lisieux.

The exquisitely striking large process photographs, of which our little reproduction can only give a faint idea, have had a phenomenal success and are much valued. The only criticism is that in this recent photograph the veil of the servant of God seems to be differently arranged as compared with the former portraits. The critics, however, have overlooked the fact that Carmelite nuns have two veils, one without any fold, and quite short, which they generally wear, the other quite large and very long, with which they cover themselves to escape observation, whenever they are obliged to open their grille, or let strangers (such as medical men or workmen) enter into their enclosure. This latter veil, when it is raised, can be arranged in any desired manner, and it is this veil which the artist has disposed so pleasingly round Sister Theresa's brow.

What God in His goodness has accomplished by the intercession of Sister Theresa of the Child Jesus, as He has deigned so often in the past to do through the instrumentality of his saints who have worked miracles, as he still does nowadays at Lourdes, ought to give us the greater confidence in prayer. Let us, therefore, ever pray with fervour and full trust in God, no matter what befalls us, forgetting not that God, the source of all good gifts, still remains equally loving and powerful."—(La Croix de Paris, Aug. 31st. 1913.)

THE WAY OF SURRENDER TO GOD.

We have already laid stress on the point that the way of complete abandonment to God taught so eloquently and alluringly by Sister Theresa of the Child Jesus, is no new teaching, but is nothing more or less than the unanimous teaching of the saints of all times. It is, therefore, with great pleasure we have come across what is practically an anticipatory life-like description of the state of soul of Sister Theresa, written by Mgr. Gay in his well-known work "La Vie et les Vertus Chrétiennes." So startlingly does the description follow the lines of Sister Theresa's sanctity, that but for the fact that the book was written long before her time, a casual reader might be tempted to believe the saintly and learned writer, though writing so many years ago, had drawn her character from life. We quote from the chapter on Abandonment:

"The soul that practises abandonment is poor, chaste, obedient: it is humble, gentle, patient and genuinely fair-minded.

It leads the life of faith; it hopes just the same as it breathes, and it loves unceasingly. Every manifestation of God's will, whatever form it may take, finds it disengaged and takes possession of it just as if it were a piece of land without an owner.

Everything seems equally good in its eyes. To be accounted worth nothing or to be thought much of, to be thought little of; to give orders or to obey without regard to whom obedience is required; to be humiliated and to be overlooked; to fail or attain success; to have plenty of leisure or to be weighed down by engagements; to be left by oneself or not to be left alone; to be placed with congenial companions or the reverse—to be feeling well, or feeling ill or ailing, or cast aside for years; to become an invalid and so be left a charge on a community that one had come expressly to serve; to live a long life or to die shortly or die at once, is all the same to it.

It wishes for everything because it wishes for nothing; and it wishes for nothing particular because it wishes for everything.

It has not an equal attraction to everything: that would be impossible, and nothing could be more fantastically im-

possible than to wish that could ever come about. Such a soul therefore, is not without feeling, and can of course suffer."

. . . . . .

"Human reason finds with good reason, such a life is a martyrdom, and crys out often upon it. Supernatural faith's prompt answer is: 'All the better.' It goes on to add it is equally the life of a confessor and of a virgin, and it is just this that fascinates the soul, because the more titles it has here on earth to sanctity, the more richly will its crown in heaven be studded with gems.

Thus turning a deaf ear to its human feelings and trading to the best advantage spiritually with its discomforts, it is ready for anything and is bespoken for anything in advance.

If others have been given more graces and seem to be more advanced in virtue, it has no need to be on its guard against feelings of jealousy; as a matter of fact it rejoices the more at it for the sake of God and of Holy Church, and the degree of glory to which it aspires is exactly that to which God has destined it.

Its miseries, nay, its very imperfections leave it untroubled and all but cheerful. Shall I add, even the faults it has committed, although it detests them in themselves, yet it accepts humbly the fact of its guilt, and is content that in this way the glories of grace and the Divine mercy, which nothing that has happened has caused it to doubt, should be thrown into relief by shadows more or less sombre."

. . . . . .

"To satisfy itself that God wishes something from it, such a soul wishes no long or methodical proofs. It makes up its mind in all simplicity in the light of supernatural faith, and so far as occasion offers by the counsels of its superiors.

As regards all the rulings of Providence, nothing could be clearer. After making all due allowance between, on the one hand, what God permits and what is evil of its own nature, and what on the other He Himself performs and is intrinsically good, such a soul accepts everything that happens and submits itself with the best will in the world. Likewise as regards everything that is of precept or rule, it is just the same.

Thus it is such a soul is little occupied with itself—why should it be?

One never finds it making itself uneasy: one can scarcely say it even uses necessary foresight. God is for it its eye and its prudence. To-morrow, in its eyes, is simply and solely the same as to-day, and that the loving will of its Father in Heaven. It does not seek to learn the future—why should it? One can't live two days at a time, but only one.

Until the sun of the will of God has shone upon anything, it gives no sign of formal choice; but once a thing appears to it to have been divinely manifested and blessed, then it is borne forward towards it, and attaches itself to it passionately; for the love of God not only is the mainspring of its existence, but is the secret of its apparent indifference, and so it is just because its life, isolated as regards other things, is all concentrated on that one point, that it is so intense.

Every manifestation of the Divine Will that reaches it, thrills it to the very depths of its soul.

Just like a little sleeping baby that his mother can never wake up, but he stretches out his arms to her, so such a soul welcomes with a smile everything God sends it, and opens its arms to it with loving affection.

The docility of such a soul is active, and its indifference is a loving one. Its life may be summed up as a living 'yes' in answer to all God asks of it."

("Vie et Vertus Chrétiennes," by Mgr. Gay II. 372, 375.)

When the end was near Sister Theresa said she was sure our Lord would never refuse her anything when she went to heaven, seeing she on earth had never refused Him anything He asked of her since she was three years old. No wonder then it has been said that this admirable delineation of a soul rooted on God really reads like a verbal photograph of the soul of Sister Theresa. The sanctity of the angel of Lisieux was therefore no new fashioned, ease-loving, new way to heaven, but one of the most minute, and searching and whole-hearted detachment from all created things: sometimes they seem little things, even perhaps, trifling and childish, but such as they were, they were her life, and what she had to give she gave without reserve and with all her heart and soul—she could do no more. What higher ideal could we have?

THE PSALM OF THE LITTLE CHILDREN.

Many of our readers will readily recall that most touching passage in the first chapter of the " History of a Soul," Sister Theresa's autobiography, where she speaks of God's constant loving care of her from the beginning, quoting the 22nd. Psalm.

" I am now able to look back upon the past, having been ripened by mental and bodily sufferings. Like a flower after the storm, I raise my head, seeing in myself the truth of the words—' the Lord is my shepherd ; I shall not want.' "

This most touching psalm, breathing, as it does, absolute reliance on the loving Providence of God, was evidently a favourite prayer of Sister Theresa. Possibly, however, she was unaware of its associations in the ancient Liturgy of the Church with the little children, and its literal fulfilment of our Blessed Lord's words : " Suffer little children to come unto Me."

In the Liturgy of the Church of Constantinople this was the Psalm appointed to be sung at the Communion of the newly-baptised, as there seem to be prophetical references in it to " the waters of rest " (Baptism), guidance (vv. 3, 4) the " table spread before me " (Holy Eucharist), the anointing of my head with oil (Confirmation or final baptismal anointing). St. Augustine adds that in consequence catechumens had to learn it by heart before Baptism, so as to be able afterwards to recite it daily in thanksgiving.

Being a very short Psalm, it might well be added to the very few Psalms (including only we believe, the " De Profundis " and the " Laudate Dominum"), learnt by heart by our children, whose special Psalm it may well be, as part of their thanksgiving after Holy Communion, and as summing up all God's mercies to them in these days, especially our Holy Father's memorable Decrees on childrens' Communion.

Knowing how Sister Theresa delighted in the Psalms, her daily devotion, we cherish the idea of giving from time to time, literal translations of some of these burning protestations of the Psalmist's love of God, which often gain so much in significance if their meaning in the original is clearly grasped. Happily there is very little obscurity in this 22nd. Psalm, but we append the version below as bringing out the points we have mentioned :

" The Lord leads me to the pastures, I shall not want.

He makes me lie down in pastures of tender grass. He leads me to the waters of the oases " (resting places).

" So He provides my soul with refreshment. He guides me in the paths of uprightness for His Name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of deep darkness, I will fear no evil ; for Thou art with me. Thy rod and Thy shepherd's staff have given me confidence."

" Thou hast laid a table for me in the very teeth of my enemies. Thou hast anointed my head with oil ; my cup is an overflowing one."

" Nought but Thy goodness and loving kindness " (instead of enemies) " shall pursue me all the days of my life ; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for length of days."

THE SPROUTING CORN.

Most of our readers will be reminded by this title, of one of the first signs of the new spirit in France, that was evidenced by the ringing and triumphant note of the much discussed novel " Le Blé qui Leve."

Elderly socialist charlatans, dubbing themselves statesmen, were congratulating themselves on the abrogation of the Concordat that a few years more would see the destruction of the French Church. They were already in their minds settling a scheme for the utilising of the Church fabrics that would no longer be wanted ; but they were reckoned without the coming generation and now that the new generation is arriving, Briand younger and more alert than the fossilising " mangeurs de prêtres," is courting this new generation in dulcet tones.

This sudden and dramatic appearance of a new generation of fervent, nay, ardent, Catholics, who are not merely ready to confess their faith, but are proud of it ; and being a vigorous, athletic, active and open-air generation, seem almost spoiling to fight for it, is one of the great surprises of this 20th. century, and a sign that God has great consolations in store for the Church of this century.

What has brought about this sudden, unexpected and dramatic change ? May we not venture to suggest as at least one of the factors Sister Theresa's memorable pledge : " I shall spend my time in heaven in doing good on the earth " ? And

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THERESIA IN PACE

what has been one of the instruments of the change but the very method the enemies of religion were most enamoured of as the one efficacious means for "putting out the lights in heaven," the enrolling of the young clergy in the army. Let us, they said, draft the seminarists into the Army—it will make men of them—once they are men they will never be priests. "Mentita est iniquitas sibi." Their premiss was correct—but their deduction was at fault. They bestowed upon the French clergy, already the finest and most exemplary in the world, the crowning glory of virility. A priest now holds up his head in France—if needs be he can give an account of himself, and what is more, his former comrades know it too, and realise he is "a better man than themselves." Before the seminarist came to the camp the Catholic soldier almost apologised for his existence—now he is proud of himself and assertive. Religion has now to be reckoned with in France, and it is, as they say—"l'audace, toujours l'audace" that is bringing the youth of the country to rally round the Church and to work unitedly to at last set up a clean, honest, manly Government in the fair land of France. Things seemed almost at their very worst when Sister Theresa made her dying promise. If the past sixteen years have seen such unexpected changes, what may we not hope for the future.

In case some of our readers fear we exaggerate, may we reassure them by giving an account of a scene at Sister Theresa's grave on August 24th. 1913.

When the good parishioners of St. Jacques, at Lisieux, went to their 6 o'clock Mass on that Sunday, they were surprised to find their church in the hands of the soldiers. They had no misgivings however, as a soldier is now no longer a free-thinker. They had taken possession of the church overnight, and had maintained a military guard of honour before the Blessed Sacrament all night, and when the faithful entered they found their brave defenders all praying with extended arms.

After a General Communion thanksgiving and breakfast, with colours flying, in military order they marched through the little town out to the cemetery, where Sister Theresa's remains still lie. With colours still flying, and singing the Magnificat, the battalion enters into the little enclosure set aside for the religious of the Carmelite Convent. The military colours are then lovingly laid on the cross at the head of her grave, and one

of the troop, on behalf of his comrades, lays a magnificent wreath on the grave. Then, after long and fervent prayer, to the strains of the "Te Deum," they go to dinner, and later in the afternoon pay a visit to "Les Buissonnets," the home of Sister Theresa's childhood, ending up with a visit to the Carmelite Convent, where they were privileged to see all the souvenirs of Sister Theresa that are enshrined there; then the day was fitly ended with a discourse by their chaplain, and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

A consoling event, and one that is significant of much it may be said, but some may, perhaps, find it hard to perceive how Sister Theresa could have had any share in inspiring this new spirit into her young countrymen—but I think we may find this new note of generous intrepidity so characteristic of Sister Theresa in her writings—so when we read her words—"I should give anything to die on the field of battle in defence of the Church. . . We must set about saving our country, preserving its faith, and keeping its honour intact. . . . My brothers will take up the task in my place—as for me, I shall keep near the royal throne—I shall make acts of love on behalf of those who fight," I think we are not far from the genesis of the new spirit.

GRACES AND FAVOURS

CREDIBLY BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN OBTAINED THROUGH THE INTERVENTION OF SISTER THERESA OF THE CHILD JESUS.

As already mentioned, the facts narrated below have not been juridically examined, and are given merely on the human authority of the writers.

The Editor will be very pleased to receive direct accounts of cures, graces or favours of any kind which the writers believe have followed as the result of invoking Sister Theresa of the Child Jesus.

Such narratives should be addressed to :—The Editor, Messenger Office, 3 Dyer's Buildings, Holborn, London. E.C.

INSTANTANEOUS CURE OF SERIOUS SPINAL DISEASE

Mme. M.S., the subject of this cure, had been ill for four years. Every winter she was confined to her bed, and walking became more and more difficult. The doctors whom she consulted treated her for stomach trouble, then for anaemia, and afterwards for nervous exhaustion. Added to this, her sight troubled her, which was put down by the doctor to the state of her general health.

After spending three months in the country away from Paris, in order to re-establish her health, the disease finally took a definite form in December 1910, on which the medical men were able to recognise it as an affection of the spinal marrow, giving it the names of myelitis, sclerosis of the spinal marrow, etc. Finally a distinguished specialist for these maladies, who was called in, ended by saying in reply to the patient's enquiries, that he was afraid total paralysis of all the limbs was impending, and would be followed by blindness.

Other medical men who were called in practically confirmed

the diagnosis with the exception of a Dr. H., who was inclined to favour the existence of a tumour pressing on the spinal column, and which, according to him, had already caused slight lesions.

The latter doctor had hopes that a long course of treatment with X-rays would restore the patient to health in the end, but he always impressed on his patient the need of great patience, explaining (as did all the previous doctors) that a cure could only come about "very gradually, taking one thing with another." A Dr. L. also who was called in to apply the X-rays, confirmed this, saying he was compelled to proceed very slowly with the treatment on account of the very serious effects these rays have on the skin, and so no result could be looked for under six months.

A beginning was made with the treatment on May 15th. 1911, and it was applied three times a week. After four weeks application the patient was but very slightly better, the doctor in charge of the case finding only that the right leg, which when the treatment began was quite stiff, could now be moved a little. But this improvement was comparatively slight, as walking was still out of the question. On April 9th. 1911, the patient, with the aid of help, endeavoured to take a few steps only for a couple of minutes, but she could only manage to accomplish it with the greatest difficulty, tottering the while, and she was so tired afterwards she had to go to bed.

The following day (April 10th), she was given a relic of Sister Theresa of the Child Jesus. She immediately commenced on this same day in union with the Carmelite Convent of Lisieux, a Novena to the dear little saint. On April 13th. Maunday Thursday, feeling herself very ill, with an outburst of confidence and love she turned to the Angel of Lisieux, taking respectfully the precious relic out of its envelope, and kissing it, she moved it along the whole length of her spinal column. By doing this she had no idea of obtaining a miraculous cure: all she asked for from Sister Theresa was the grace to endure with resignation and profit the painful trial she was going through, saying: "If my feet are fastened to the ground, if they are so heavy, nevertheless make my soul light and detached." At that moment she seemed to hear a voice within her saying—"but your feet are not in the least fastened to the ground!" At the same moment she felt an impulse impelling her to lift up her right leg, which up to that moment had been stiff and heavy, and which she could only drag along with

difficulty. To her astonishment she was able to move it with the greatest ease! The excessive weight which she usually felt had disappeared as if by magic! At once she tried walking, and she was able to do so without support, quite naturally, and without the slightest fatigue. The little saint had then instantly cured her! Great as was her emotion in giving an account of this cure, no words could possibly express her gratitude to her who had bestowed upon her such an extraordinary gift. During the ensuing night the pain in the back disappeared. The next morning, Good Friday, she went to church alone. In the same way, without assistance, she went again on Holy Saturday, and on Easter Sunday she was able to make her Easter Communion in the Church.

A charming little incident makes this cure yet more marvellous.

The little daughter of Mme. S., aged 7 years, went to her mother's bedside the day before the cure, and finding her mother still in pain, said to her—"You know, little mother, you will be cured to-morrow!" "You must not talk like that," said her mother, "you know quite well that that's impossible." The little one replied—"But I've prayed to God for it!" "You mustn't ask God for impossibilities" was the reply, "ask Him to give His blessing to this treatment and that I may be better in six months." But the little one who always was so obedient, insisted: "But God told me so plainly, little Mother! He said to me 'Not to-day, but to-morrow, your little Mother will be cured,' so you see I have arranged it all with Him."

Of course it is needless to say the little one was crowing the next morning.

AN INSTANTANEOUS CURE OF TUBERCULOSIS

On Monday, Sept. 1st. 1913, Mr. H. P. of S. in Kent, who previously had suffered from inflammation of the lungs while in Canada, caught a severe chill while motoring. He had already undergone an operation in the early part of the year for stomach trouble, and so his power of resistance was naturally much below the average. Both his usual medical attendant as well as a specialist sent for from London pronounced his case most serious, diagnosing it as acute pleuritic inflammation of the base of the left lung, probably tubercular in character, but what was far more serious, phthisis was

found actually to have attacked the apex of the right lung. They held out some slight hope of the pleuritic attack terminating favourably, though they feared this was unlikely, but in the event even of improvement in the pleuritic symptoms, the phthisis in the right lung they feared had become too firmly established to expect any cure.

A novena of Masses was immediately commenced for his cure, and the good Sisters of the Carmel of Lisieux also made a special novena for the same intention. On the 7th. day of the novena the prognosis seemed most unfavourable, and, in order to relieve the immediate symptoms, the patient was tapped and a quantity of liquid was drawn from the left side. This caused a good deal of relief, but the next day, even in the evening, the patient was entirely free from fever, the temperature being normal. The following day the temperature was again normal. The doctor was surprised, as even though the pleurisy were cured, a high temperature ought necessarily to have been caused by the phthisical state of the right lung. The patient recovered rapidly, and sat out in the open air without inconvenience, though the weather was somewhat damp and unfavourable. The medical man could not be persuaded that the phthisis had disappeared, even though it seemed dormant on examination, and urged Mr. H. P. to winter in a warmer and a drier climate than that of England. Wishing to show his confidence in the Little Flower, Mr. H. P. demurred—The doctor was insistent, and, in order to urge him to go away, sent his *sputum* to the Bacteriological Laboratory in London for examination. The report was—" No bacilli in *sputum*." The doctor was still unconvinced and insisted on sending another sample, saying that they frequently mixed the specimens sent to them. This time the Report was equally emphatic—" No signs of tubercle of any kind."

Mr. H. P. stayed the whole winter in England without the slightest sign of any relapse, and without suffering the least inconvenience. He wishes to express his most heartfelt gratitude to Sister Theresa, who, he feels certain, has snatched him from the very jaws of death, and preserved him to his wife and young family.

A CURE OF PHTHISIS AT THE ANTIPODES

St. Mary's Convent,
Nelson, New Zealand.

Nearly two months ago our Rev. Mother Prioress (who is a native of France) was rather ill—was coughing dreadfully and spitting blood. She had been coughing for about 18 months. We sent for the doctor and he said she was in consumption. We began a novena to the "Little Theresa," and on the third day the bleeding ceased and has never come on again, and the coughing stopped about the same time. The school children and our little orphans continued the novena and began a second, and on the last day of the second novena the doctor said that Rev. Mother would get strong again and would be all right in two months time. We had all prayed so fervently for this, and had promised to try and spread devotion to the "Little Flower" among the children, and it is in fulfilment of this promise that we are now sending for these pictures, etc. We have fully 300 children in our schools, so should be grateful if there would be sufficient for all. Again, may we ask you as a special favour to write an account of this to the Carmel of Lisieux.—Signed,

MARIE BERTELL OF J., R.N.D. DE M.

CURE OF CONSUMPTION OF A MISSIONARY

Casa dei Missioni, Genova.

I have returned from India, where I was a lay missionary for years, consumptive; but was miraculously suddenly cured *en route*. Coming to Europe, I had no place to go (as I was to go to a hospital in Turin as a free patient, to await my death). Now I am here as a servant with £1 monthly and food. As this humble state is the very one to imitate our humble Jesus at Nazareth, I hope (D.V.) to stay for life. If I had means how I would love to propagate the mercies of dear Theresa, to whom I owe so much and by whose help I hope nothing less than to become a saint. Any soiled matter, pamphlets, pictures—in English, German, Portuguese, or Italian—I will gladly distribute on my own mail expenses. God bless abundantly your work. With many greetings.—Very sincerely yours,

K. STANISLAUS KOSTCA.

TWO REMARKABLE CURES IN EXTREME OLD AGE.

About the middle of April 1914, a Mr. M., a well-known business man in the city of London, resident at S——, in Kent, received an urgent summons to go and see his father, who was lying very dangerously ill at B——, in the north of Ireland. As the cause of his illness was old age, and he had already reached the ripe old age of 95, and as the doctor had insisted on all the members of the family being summoned, Mr. M—— scarcely hoped he would arrive in time to receive his father's dying blessing. Before leaving England he sent word to his parish priest asking him to pray for his father's happy death. The parish priest offered up Mass for his intention, recommending the case, as he habitually did, to Sister Theresa's intercession. Mr. M—— was fortunate enough to find his father still alive on his arrival, and told him of the prayers that were being offered for him. He also found that his sister, a devout client of Sister Theresa, was also praying for the same intention. What was their consolation to find that instead of sinking, as the doctor predicted, their father began to regain strength, and within a couple of weeks Mr. M—— was back again at his business in London, and was able to tell his friends, some of whom had begun condoling with him, that when he left B—— the day before, his father was busy mowing the lawn. A subsequent letter received by him on May 13th. 1914, conveyed the cheering assurance that his father had so completely recovered that he was once more thoroughly enjoying himself, in his 96th. year, digging in the garden. He hastened to impart the news of his father's happy recovery to a life-long friend of his in France, M. le Comte de la Roche Aymon, also a most devout client of Sister Theresa's. In reply, he received the following remarkable letter:—

> "My Dear Friend—It has given me the greatest pleasure to learn of the improvement in health of your dear father, which has allowed you to return to London. I hope this improvement will be maintained, and that, despite his 95 years, your dear father may yet be spared many years to you. Also, as I have already had to inform you, my own father too has been very ill, so much so that on the day before that fixed for my departure for England he was attacked by bronchitis as well as congestion of the lungs, complicated a

few days later by phlebitis. He remained ill for so long that on Thursday last we felt convinced that his last hour was at hand. At his own request his confessor was summoned, who gave him all the Last Sacraments, including Holy Viaticum. As all hope seemed lost, we hung round his neck a relic of the little Sister Theresa of the Child Jesus, whose process of Canonisation is now in progress, and we made certain promises to be carried out by us in the event of our father being saved. A little while later there was an improvement in his general state, and when the doctor called the next morning there was scarcely any trace left of his phlebitis. This improvement has not only been maintained, but my father has made good progress towards recovery, and the doctor practically considers him quite out of danger. He, of course, still remains weak, but he is well on the road towards recovery, and I only hope his convalescence will not be too lengthy—as in view of his 90 years, we naturally feel some anxiety until he is quite well again. With all kindest regards.

Believe me yours sincerely,

A. DE LA ROCHE AYMON.

Paris, May 5th, 1914.

At the time of writing, both these excellent Catholic gentlemen are enjoying quite good health, and show no signs of relapse.

W.M.C.

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T344
CUNNINGHAM, W.
AUTHOR
The Unfolding of the Little
TITLE Flower

DATE LOANED	BORROWER'S NAME	ROOM NUMBER
	Local	DEC 29

4257